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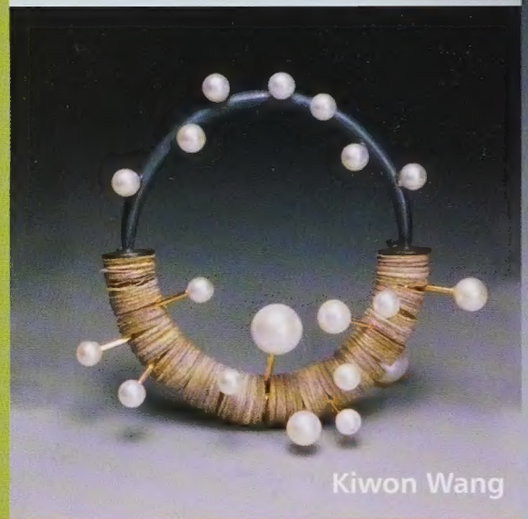

Kiwon Wang

Michael Boyd

SIMON: Red Zinnia brooch, enamel on copper, silver. WANG: Dia brooch, mixed media, pearls. BOYD: 22 & 18 karat gold, red coral, colored diamonds, various gemstones, photo by Steve Bigley. LEE: sterling silver rings.

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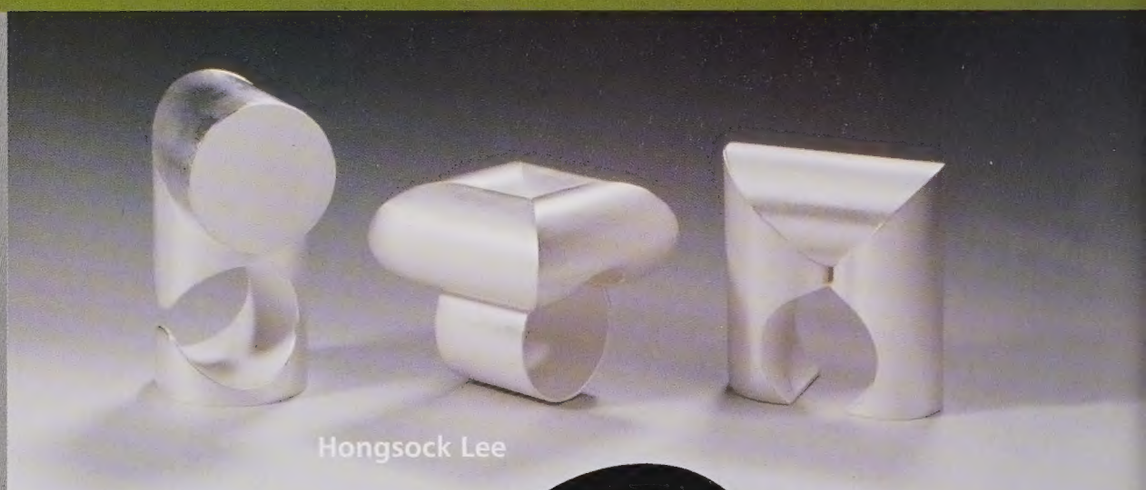

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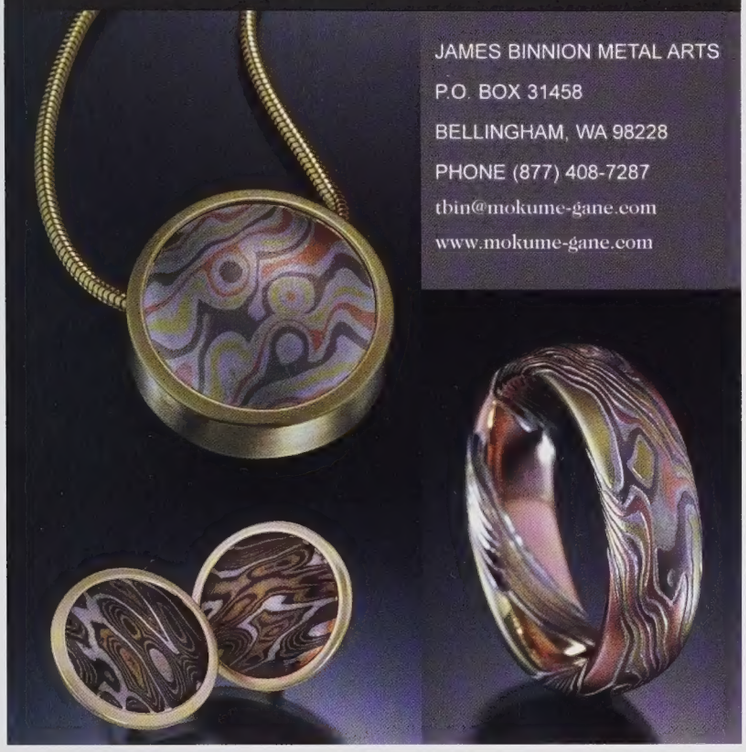

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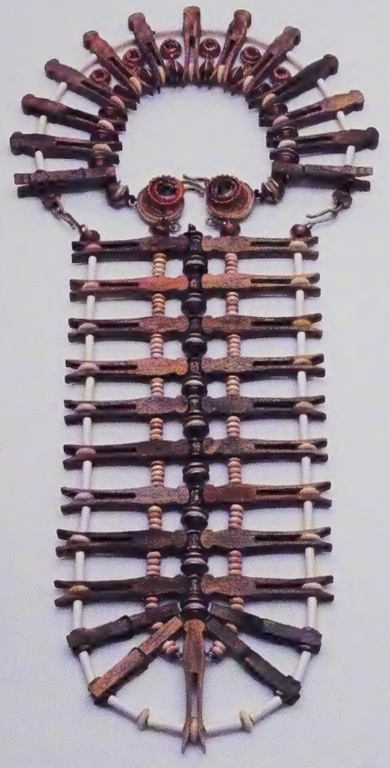

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Jamie Bennett
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2 1/4 x 2 1/4"
enamel, 18k gold, copper
Photo: Kevin Sprague

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

On the 150th anniversary of Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) birth, his insights on individual psychology and cultural dynamics remain gripping. Not surprisingly, Freud's ideas are cited more than once in this issue of *Metalsmith*. Indeed, the underlying theme could be called the "return of the repressed," in keeping with Freud's notion that whatever we ban from consciousness inevitably reappears, albeit in altered guise.

Within modern art, it is the decorative arts and crafts that have been unduly repressed, and with them the mandates of the body. Polly Ullrich's Opinion piece addresses this aesthetic hierarchy, which holds that "'art' should never be impinged on by the sordid qualities of daily life (where usefulness resides)." Fortunately, such categories are eroding. "The role of the human body....is increasingly being acknowledged in the way we construct our sense of the "reality" of the world," Ullrich states. "This has opened an aesthetic space for functional art, which traditionally locates meaning in the fluidity of bodily participation and sensation." She further suggests that craft's functionality has the radical potential to disrupt larger cultural hegemonies.

In his article on Jamie Bennett's work, writer Glen Brown tells a similar tale of repression involving ornament and decorative arts. He also grants the "subversive power of the decorative," acknowledging the ability of this long-suppressed field to transform culture. According to Brown, Bennett's own art evolved from a rejection of the decorative "as non-conceptual, non-critical, and non-progressive" to an embrace of ornament as "connected historically to a fundamental process of humanizing the world, controlling the environment by imposing certain elements of recognizably human design upon it."

Bennett's recent "Mosaic Scenarios" series evokes yet another Freudian term—polymorphous perversity—a condition we possess at birth that affords us unadulterated pleasure in the world and our bodies. Such sensual revelry marks the jewelry field at large, where the pleasure principle still reigns over the reality principle in gorgeous authority.

SR

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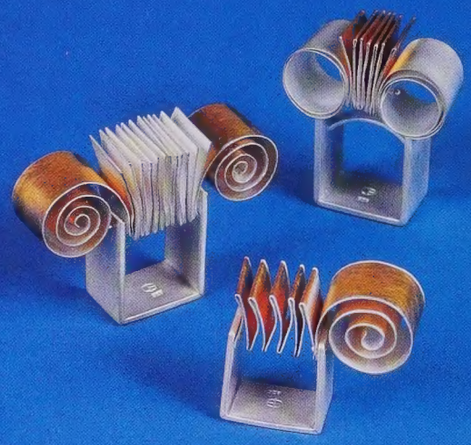

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BOOKS

by Andrea DiNoto

Robert Lee Morris: The Power of Jewelry

Robert Lee Morris, Foreword by Donna Karan
Harry N. Abrams, 2004

Has success spoiled Robert Lee Morris? His glossy new coffee-table book cum autobiography begs the question as it reveals, in one instance, his glee in "hamming it up" on the QVC channel, "selling 2,000 sand dollar pendants in 10 minutes." You could argue that Morris has indeed lost his artistic moorings by flinging himself—shall we say shamelessly?—into the lucrative mass-market with his manufactured Studio line. But this book makes clear that Morris is still guided by principles that have informed his work from the outset of his nearly three-decade-long career: to be in touch with his inner artist-entrepreneur, to be willing to constantly re-invent himself, to respond creatively to market forces, to embrace fashion, and yet remain one with his spiritual core. Morris considers his latest production work to be as expressive of these principles as the groundbreaking, hand-hammered urban-warrior collections that made his name. This is the through-line of the story Morris, self-mythologizer extraordinaire, tells in an entertainingly conversational and informative text that vividly documents an era as it traces the author's artistic evolution. Because the text tends to move back and forth in time—a flaw that a simple chronology and some thoughtful editing could have eliminated—the reader is sometimes disoriented and confused by the sequence of events. Yet despite this minor annoyance, Morris's story remains compelling, and the book itself perfectly expresses the designer at his best. Bold and stylish, it is filled with dozens of artfully staged, full color photos of his work, from the earliest, and arguably best, iconic body-armor collections to the current manufactured lines that have, ironically, brought him the widest possible name recognition via television. Visually, it's an impressive documentation, made all the more interesting by Morris's lively storytelling.

A military brat, Morris, 56, was born to a dashing Air Force pilot father and a fashion model mother. He discovered his entrepreneurial talents at age 10, when he had the idea to sell mail-order greeting cards door-to-door at the Tachikawa Air Force base in Japan where he was living with his family. A year later, his father was transferred to Charleston Air Force base in South Carolina, where Morris shared a profitable Krispy Kreme donut route with his sister, while at the same time experiencing profound culture shock. After the cultural richness and refinements of Japan, he found himself in a mind-numbing football-oriented high school, where he rebelliously led the art club—"the equivalent of being black in a white school." But, as luck would have it, his father was once again transferred, this time to Rio, where Morris became enraptured by the sensual, exotic, multicultural atmosphere that would infuse his future work. He then made another quantum leap to Beloit College in frigid Wisconsin, where he seriously explored filmmaking as a career. His mentor at Beloit was sculpture instructor George Garner, whom Morris credits generously with awakening artistic impulses that eventually led him from a New Hampshire craft fair to New York's Sculpture to Wear boutique, and eventually to the opening in 1977 of Artwear, his own store. Artwear showcased cutting-edge jewelry by Morris and several now-prominent designers such as Ted Muehling, Cara Croninger, Patricia Von Muslin, and Thomas Gentille, whose book on jewelry-making taught Morris the basics, and whose unique brooches and bracelets, says Morris, "inspired all the other artists in the gallery." Morris's brilliant concept for jewelry display—life casts of naked torsos—perfectly suited the presentation of his oversized metal pieces inspired by tribal art and industrial culture. His remarkable repertoire of signature forms were for the most part created by the early 1980s: tubular and platelike constructions (cannoli shell, cartridge, snake scale, blade, etc.), large and small hand-hammered discs (concave, dimpled)

conceived as bold body armor worn as breastplates, belts, bangles, necklaces, or rings. The fashion world went wild for this unorthodox work, which was featured in 49 consecutive issues of *Vogue*. Morris, in his own, often breathless, telling, became a media darling, cavorting with all the usual suspects at Studio 54 as his work was being collected by the likes of Liza Minelli and Andy Warhol. In one of his more amusing stories, Morris tells of being invited by Warhol to a party at fashion doyenne Diana Vreeland's apartment. He wore one of his father's old flight suits accessorized with, among other things, a silver face helmet and a seven-foot-long spear. When he approached Vreeland "she gasped and shrieked, 'I love it!!!' and jumped up to meet me."

In 1981, Morris won his first Coty Award for his work with Calvin Klein, which included a collection of slender, patinated brass bracelets shaped like blades of grass. He also entered into at least five licensing agreements, including one with Warner Brothers to design Batman and Superman jewelry. Reflecting on his success in the fashion world, Morris articulates the insight that has set him apart from many other art jewelers: "The challenge has always been to celebrate the ethnic mood while keeping an urban chic that gives flexibility in fashion and everyday wear." It is significant that at a 1989 SNAG lecture titled "How I Do 18 Collections a Year" Morris estimated that 80 percent of attendees gave him a standing ovation, while 20 percent booed him as a sellout.

Morris's book makes clear that without his embrace and understanding of fashion his jewelry business might have languished in gallery limbo. But given his phenomenal versatility, his instinct for self-reinvention coupled with an ebullient and irrepressible personality, he could hardly have done otherwise. His most successful fashion collaboration—first in the early 1990s then again in 2003—has been with fashion designer Donna Karan, for whom he created bold matte-gold forms to accent black, formfitting clothes, even integrating jewelry with the structure of a dress, thus deftly bringing the once cutting-edge idea of wearable art into the mainstream.

But fashion, as Morris understands too well, is of the moment. In the early 1990s, as the Grunge movement virtually erased the wearing of serious jewelry from the scene, Artwear closed and, as Morris reports, only his Celtic crosses continued to sell, presumably for their penitential symbolism (oh, the excesses of the 1980s!). Then in 1995, after a widely hailed retrospective at the museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology, he took the QVC plunge, believing that the future of retail lay in television. At the same time, he sold his company, but not his name, to M. Fabrikant & Sons, a manufacturer of fine jewelry. Morris, now free, he says, to pursue his art without financial pressure, is producing jewelry in which the big, edgy forms of yore have been sublimated—polished and downscaled—for a broad fashion-oriented market that knows him primarily from his Donna Karan partnership. Now married and the father of a daughter, Taylor, to whom he has dedicated this book, Morris spends time on his land in New Mexico, seriously practices, yes, shamanism, and produces 10 jewelry collections a year. When he states that "part of my soul-identity is to be on the edge, as a trendsetter...this is what I am expected to be," one can only observe that in fact Morris's "edge," like its progenitor, has mellowed. Which is fine, because if, in these discouraging times, as we bravely ride the subways and walk the streets wondering "What next?" we find ourselves yearning for Robert Lee Morris's original power jewelry—breastplates, ammo belts, knuckle rings, and such—we need only log on to eBay. As Morris tells us in his book—it's still there. And so is he.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer who specializes in decorative arts and design.

OPINION

by Polly Ullrich

Use and Meaning

How do we talk about William Frederick's sensuous *Vase with Floating Lapis*? Solidly useful, rooted by its maker in the socially progressive Arts and Crafts movement, the *Vase* projects a visceral presence in a physical world comfortably inhabited by human beings. For centuries, objects such as Frederick's *Vase* have been denied artistic standing simply because there was little way to incorporate them into an aesthetic taxonomy set up by Western European philosophers during the Enlightenment. Since then, it has been a struggle to articulate functional craft art as we do other art forms—as vehicles of meaning, as dynamic objects that help us make sense of the world, as a "form of revealed truth," as the Arts and Crafts thinker Edward Carpenter put it. The anthropologist Margaret Mackenzie compares talking about function to "opening a wound," because craft artists so believe that these objects continue to be ghettoized into the lowest of art hierarchies.

Recently, a number of articles in art magazines have touted nonfunctional art works whose main purpose was to comment on the "idea" of function. As a critic, I, too, have written articles like this—and not so long ago. But I have begun to ask myself why we must manufacture meaning for functional objects from a nonfunctional stance. It is clearly a safer position from which to construct art, carefully cocooned as it is within old-fashioned Kantian aesthetic categories that mandated that "art" should never be impinged on by the sordid qualities of daily life (where usefulness resides). It is a stance still in sway in much of the fine art world despite repeated attacks by whole movements within Postmodernism, ranging from the Pop Art of the 1960s to contemporary environmental artists who have developed utilitarian, ecologically sustainable projects as aesthetic forms.

Wouldn't it be more fruitful, however, to investigate the aesthetic meaning of function—not from the outside, banished into the useless parameters of fine art—but rather from within, within the significance of the phenomenological give and take of making and using, within the daily world of lived experience? This is the "space between necessity and imagination" according to ceramic artist Wayne Higby. Clearly, function is not simply a static quality frozen into an object; rather, function is performative, bound up with social events and contexts, tied to the aesthetic, existential, moral and political possibilities present in the ordinary lives of human beings.

Precisely because of its entwinement with daily living, experiential objects such as *Vase with Floating Lapis* reach to the heart of current debates in philosophy and aesthetics in two crucial ways. First, because fluidity and digitization dominate the discourse of contemporary society, there is sustained and concentrated interest in our culture in what it means for something to be "real." The role of the human body—as the location of personal identity, as a site for radical action, and as a base to explore materiality—is increasingly being acknowledged in the way we construct our sense of the "reality" of the world. This has opened an aesthetic space for functional art, which traditionally locates meaning in the fluidity of bodily participation and sensation.

Second, functional craft art—because of its honorable lineage within radical and progressive movements for social change—allows us to begin to think of objects as "events," as political and moral actions. The role of the functional object within the ideals of the international Arts and Crafts Movement provides an invaluable antecedent for contemporary artists who are exploring their work as a socially transformative practice. To insist that functional craft art deserves an important place within a system of aesthetics and philosophy is a political act, for it challenges inappropriate hierarchies in the world of art that reflect those in other political, scientific and cultural arenas. Overturn one, and perhaps others will crumble.

Phenomenological Function

Advances in science and philosophy in the last century have created a sea change in fundamental assumptions about physical reality in Western culture—and it is these developments (as farfetched as it may seem) that reposition the place of *Vase with Floating Lapis* within an aesthetics of experience. In the field of physics, for example, the universe can be understood as a vast holistic energy field of interactive events that are described through models incorporating process and continual change rather than

left
William Frederick
Vase with Floating Lapis, 2005
hand fabricated sterling silver, lapis lazuli
9 x 4 1/2 x 5 1/2"
Photo: Mary Clare Glabowicz

through the discovery of static structures. Quantum theory, in which electrons in an experiment can either appear as waves or particles depending on the observer, has upended what once was considered "objective" reality. The external physical world no longer appears to operate by linear Newtonian causation, but rather by a matrix of fluctuating relationships, one of which includes the participation of the viewer.

In the field of philosophy, function's alignment with the physical world and the processes of the body—with "dumb matter"—originally stigmatized it for engaging the "lowly" bodily senses rather than the "higher" abstract mind. But as what constitutes "the real stuff" of the world has been transformed in the last century, so has the very notion of what constitutes the "real stuff" of an artwork. A goal of contemporary visual art has shifted from the representation of the world of objects toward an emphasis on experience and sensation. Art's role as a form of perception is currently echoed in cognitive science, digital theory, and philosophies of phenomenology. All of these fields now posit human consciousness, or perception, as a moment-to-moment event, gathered from a wide, rich mixture of mind, body and environment.

Phenomenology, broadly speaking, can be defined as a philosophy that searches for existential meaning by analyzing human consciousness and experience rather than by seeking the foundations of permanent abstract truths. A phenomenology of functional craft art, therefore, recognizes that the very structure that allows humans to produce meaning in the world—perception—emerges from bodily participation in a dynamic flow through time, rather than a solid feeling of existence based on abstract models in the mind. The American Pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, who defined art as a "quality of activity," rather than a physical thing, characterized an artwork as an accumulation of interactions between a viewer and the art, culminating in a dense intertwining of physical and conceptual experiences. And so it is with William Frederick's *Vase with Floating Lapis*, its meaning based within the dynamic nexus of an experiential, synthesizing, and evolving event—that is, its day-to-day use by an embodied human being immersed in the processes and materiality of the physical world.

Phenomenological Politics

Perhaps it was no accident that the onset of world-changing discoveries in physics, beginning with Einstein's first paper on the theory of relativity, emerged at the height of the Arts and Crafts Movement in 1905. While it is fashionable to denigrate Arts and Crafts followers as bungling amateurs, the encouragement of the "homemade" or the vernacular, as well as the "professional," in the movement indicates how deeply its practitioners attempted to explode the aesthetic hierarchies and boundaries between art and everyday life by elevating the status of the decorative arts produced in all kinds of environments, from the domestic to the commercial. The objects produced from the Arts and Crafts—like the physics of the new modern era—were meant to be dynamic and transformative. Through idealistic and democratic principles for living and working, they were intended to critique (and serve as an antidote to) the deadening, stultifying environments imposed by nineteenth-century industrialization. For that reason, the historian Alan Powers has called the Arts and Crafts Movement "less a style than a mode of critical thinking."

Consider, then, the phenomenological implications of the Arts and Crafts Movement: the world of objects was a political world for the artists and designers of "the art that is life." "Gestures of resistance," wrote the phenomenology scholar Laura Doyle, "happen in the flesh...Stories of exploration and stories of resistance are written upon objects." Arts and Crafts objects, caught up in the physical flux of daily life, reveal human perception embedded in ethical contingencies; their making and their using challenged habitual and oppressive ways of thinking, acting, and feeling. Their conceptual base was clear: the quality of one's life is inextricably linked to the quality of one's perceptual abilities.

Almost anyone who has read about the Arts and Crafts Movement knows it for its emphasis on the social consequences of making: the movement is often associated with the reification of hand work, particularly in Great Britain, which suffered serious social ills from early industrialization and the exploitation of workers in factories. But in fact, Arts and Crafts hand skills were not as important, once again, as social change. If "good design" was the goal for everyone, then it had to be affordable and machinery was more practical. Studios that integrated hand craft and small machinery under good working conditions for craftspeople flourished in the United States and Germany.

William Frederick's hand-fabricated *Vase with Floating Lapis* falls more clearly, however, into the branch of the Arts and Crafts that delighted in making sure that the history of human making was recorded upon a functional object. *Vase* contains the compressed energy of Frederick's hands; it is a record of what the phenomenologist Robert Irwin called "a calculus of presence," a "pure energy build up." The intensity of such a search for perfection in making could be seen as a metaphor for other more obviously profound quests. But when *Vase's* owner smudges Frederick's tiny handmade dings and flaws with her own fingers—as she polishes, washes it, fills it with water and flowers—she carries those marks into a phenomenological aesthetic uniquely provided by functional art objects. It is an art form that does not stand still, but rather emerges from and is integrated into the processes of a lived life. Its meaning is worked out in the acute particulars of a specific body, a specific location, and a specific time.

Polly Ullrich is an art critic living in Chicago.

STUDIO

by Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe

Harlan W. Butt

Harlan Butt's studio stands adjacent to his Texas home, nestled deep in a stand of oak trees, just upstream from Lewisville Lake. Yet this pastoral setting is marked with the typical sharp edges of the Texas countryside: waves of poison ivy, mounds of fire ants, corners filled with recluse spiders and scorpions, and copperheads sunning themselves on his gravel driveway.

Dichotomies like these—attraction and repulsion, east and west, absolute and relative—have informed and inspired Butt's work for more than two decades. This summer, he finished several vessels in his "Snakes in Heaven" series for a retrospective of his work at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. In the series, small snakes travel across each vessel, which themselves are adorned with layers of clouds. Other work in the exhibit included chalices, tea caddies, vases, and writing boxes.

"Snakes in Heaven" continues Butt's Buddhist-inspired awareness of nature. He filled his studio with detailed posters of snakes and clouds that would populate the series to connect the spiritual and scientific. "Things are questioned through the scientific method," Butt says, "But when we react according to emotions, science doesn't do much to solve problems or add to beauty. Traditionally, stories explained things that were not easily explained. Snakes have a lot of baggage with them, metaphorically. They got a bad rap in the Garden of Eden."

Even Butt has mixed experiences. Playing in the dirt when he was little, he dug up a snake, which bit him and hung from his hand when he pulled away. He has a new perspective on the old trauma now that he sees snakes around his studio. "I'm sure it was terrifying for the snake. Now they are familiar to me and not as creepy."

Butt is well known for his enamel technique, creating rich depth and luminous color. He finds satisfaction in each step, and describes filling the cells as meditative work. On the vessel's surface, his cloisonné adornment transcends the pattern in the wire, made as if hundreds of tiny cumulous clouds have interlocked themselves. Other billowing clouds float by in the enamel's shimmer. "The pattern is superimposed in spite of the landscape. The idea is to go after not only the things we see, but the connections to what we don't see that are there—the molecular, the vapor in the air," he says. Butt uses an airbrush for gum solution or binder and says it isn't hard to get a good, initial coat. He sometimes customizes apparatus for the firings, which can number 30 to 40 for each vessel.

Butt's studio has dedicated ventilation stations, each linked to one of two exhaust systems, for every step of the work. He recommends using a mask to block particulate as well. Even though artists work lead-free where he teaches at the University of North Texas, at home he's gone back to the leaded enamels from Japanese companies.

People often ask him how he repeats the wirework so precisely, so he shows other artists how to build wire-bending jigs when he gives workshops. "It's another tool that you can learn in a short period of time," he claims. "However, it's what happens afterward that is instructive. Skills are important even if you decide to reject them."

For Butt ideas are primary, although as an art professor, he knows fostering good creative thinkers, especially in the crafts, is tough. He once found value in a workshop that used poetry to that end. "We wrote haiku every day and we had to come with at least five poems," he says.

An exciting element of unpredictability remains in his work, even after years of experience. The key is "learning when to stop and recognizing the point of decline" he says, which is true not only of the work on a single piece, but also on series. "I had this idea after seeing Mount Fuji, to do *1,000 Views of Mt. Mu*. I got up to 20 and the idea was unending, so I stopped. I thought it had played out, but I've picked it up again recently. There's a difference between

repeating yourself and doing alterations. You don't want your work overdone, over-thought, or overworked."

"I consider myself a craftsman. The arguments seem defensive, but I embrace the crafts and being part of a tradition. Working with your hands keeps it real and keeps a connection to the material." His enamel study in Japan and Korea encouraged that connection, and recent travels and studies in India are steering him towards pattern and exploring meaning through the complexity of things. He admits his ideas aren't fully formed yet, but he's been thinking about Indra's net, a fishing net with multifaceted jewels at each knot, itself a metaphor for human existence. According to Butt, "Art in India is somewhat the opposite of Japan—seeking reality through complexity."

With its references to cell structure and story line, "Snakes in Heaven" seems to bridge the two cultures, much as one might expect of an artist who creates his work among the copperheads.

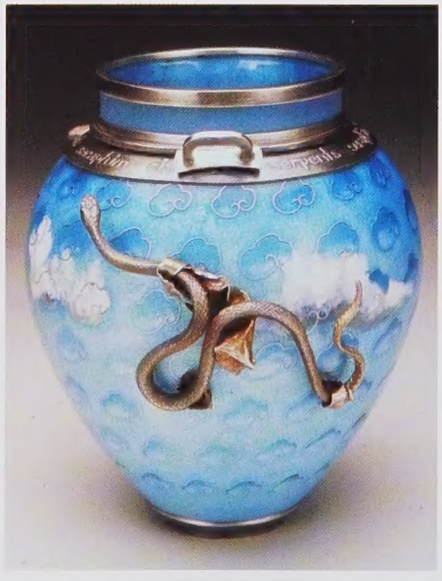
Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe is a freelance arts and culture writer who lives in Argyle, Texas.

opposite page
Harlan Butt watches a copperhead snake on the gravel driveway outside his Denton, Texas studio.
Photo: Li Fan

clockwise from top
The artist prepares to add another layer of enamel to a vessel from his "*Snakes in Heaven*" series.
Photo: Li Fan

Harlan Butt's studio reflects several decades of collecting and adapting equipment to his needs.
Photo: Li Fan

Snakes In Heaven: Vase #2, 2005
silver, enamel
8 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2"
Photo: Rafael Molina



Jamie Bennett

In Deference to the Decorative

by Glen R. Brown

Like the merits of popular culture, the value of the decorative has been a particularly modern point of contention. Since the nineteenth century perhaps no other term has suffered more from the concept of aesthetic hierarchy. Yet the avant-garde on two notable occasions seized upon the decorative as a valuable term within the dialectic of modern art. The Nabis painters at the turn of the century and the Pattern and Decoration (P&D) artists of the late 1970s found in the decorative the antithesis of an austere and reductive status quo and therefore an effective means of furthering aesthetic revolution. Important as it was within the confines of modern art theory, the subversive power of the decorative proved even more significant in general cultural terms. In this context, advocacy of the decorative was a manifestation of the universalizing tendency inherent in modernist thought: in particular, the faith in a ubiquitous human nature and its capacity to shape the world in common human terms. The Nabis painters, after all, invoked the decorative under the influence of Japanese prints, and the P&D artists, like Matisse before them, approached it principally through the inspiration of Islamic art. In both instances indulgence in the decorative marked a kind of return of the repressed: a recognition of something fundamental in human creativity that had become undervalued, even denigrated, in Western art.

Deer Run Series (brooch), 1986
enamel, silver, 18k gold
4 1/2 x 2 1/2"
Photo: Dean Powell

At the outset of his career as a painter and metalsmith, Jamie Bennett could hardly have anticipated championing the decorative, or more specifically the ornamental, through his work. Steeped in the strictures of 1970s Minimalism, he felt a natural aversion to surface embellishment and even a reluctance to incorporate color into his compositions. In good New-York-School formalist fashion, he rejected the decorative as non-conceptual, non-critical, and non-progressive: a primary characteristic of what imperious critics such as Clement Greenberg were disdainfully dismissing as "craft." In his own work in the mid 1970s Bennett, like so many modern painters of the time, sought to reject conceptual superficiality through philosophical reflection on essential properties, most importantly the quality of flatness. In a series of enameled "Pattern Brooches," he emphasized the consonance of image and

Mosaic Scenarios #8 (brooch), 2005
18k gold, enamel
2 1/4 x 2 1/4"

Safavid #4 (brooch), 2001
enamel, 18k gold
1 3/4 x 1 3/4"
Photo: Dean Powell

Priori Brooches, 1988
enamel, copper
4 3/4 x 3/4"
Photo: Dean Powell

surface, figure and ground, by representing paper dress patterns as though pressed flat on a tabletop. Like the Nabis painter Edouard Vuillard, Bennett had grown up the son of a fashion designer and dressmaker. Unlike Vuillard, however, in his subsequent references to cutouts Bennett deliberately omitted the attractive color and repetitive motifs associated with the decorative. Planar sparseness was his acknowledged aim.

In addition to demonstrating antipathy for pictorial depth, these early "Pattern Brooches" revealed a reluctance to engage the tradition of enameling, which Bennett found hopelessly tied to conventional processes such as champlevé or cloisonné. Renouncing enamel's glossiness and jewel-like translucence as inherently deceptive, he undermined them by incorporating opacifiers in his enamels and grinding or stoning the surfaces to create a non-reflective finish. These drastic alterations to established technique—which echo the revolutionary shift from the traditional mode of oil painting in successive translucent glazes to the alla prima process of the modern masters—were not gratuitously rebellious. If there is a slightly insurgent quality to the imagery of the "Pattern Brooches" (partly a consequence of Bennett's acquaintance with the Chicago-based Hairy Who group), this derives more from his technical innovations than irreverence for tradition. The quadrilateral shapes of the brooches, the nonchalant attitude toward the findings as mere "hanging bars," and the fact that many of the brooches were set within very un-bezel-like frames are clues to the degree to which Bennett conceived of his "Pattern Brooches" as miniature paintings. Their status as jewelry was only tangential, and Bennett initially attached no great importance to the precedent they were setting for a discipline-wide exploration of opacity and texture in enameling.

Bennett's dominant interest in painting would rapidly prove significant for other innovations in enameling as well, particularly in the technique of cloisonné. Finding the hard, encompassing "cartoon line" of the cloison to be inadequate for conveying the gestural qualities of his preliminary sketches, he sought to achieve a more painterly line in his brooches by forging the wire into varying thicknesses. More importantly, he ruptured the formerly mandatory closed shape by devising a means of incorporating straight, freestanding cloisons in his compositions. Ordinarily, to remain upright the cloison must either curve significantly or abut another cloison. By invoking the engineering principles of an I-beam and bending the wires to create small feet, Bennett was able to produce the effect of short line segments: independent dashes of metal within a continuous field of enamel. This structural innovation, which would have been visible through transparent enamel, was effectively hidden by the opaque surfaces that had become a standard feature of Bennett 's brooches. As is so often the case in design, one innovation justified itself by making possible the next.

Throughout his career Bennett has demonstrated a pronounced artistic restlessness, even a willingness to overturn some of his strongest aesthetic convictions in the spirit of

experimentation. For example, his skepticism toward color—which attained its severest expression in a series of black and white brooches—eventually diminished and ultimately gave way to curiosity. His misgivings had always arisen from the potential of color to misrepresent surfaces in the way that a veil obscures what lies beneath. Decorative color, he has observed, can be like "kudzu, tricking us, offering a luxurious visual effect while strangling the magic and importance of the object it covers." By the early 1980s, however, he had begun to consider the possibility of color as a material component of surface rather than something akin to a camouflage for it. This change in attitude accompanied a broader shift in his conception of the brooch away from the model of a self-contained, diminutive painting and toward the idea of an object linked to a larger visual context. The immediate material consequence of this line of thought was the 1982 series of "Fragmented Pattern" brooches.

In this series, and in his subsequent "Red Site" brooches, Bennett explored the idea of a magnified vision, an enlarged view of a single section of pattern: a perspective that he likened to an intense focus on an isolated thread within a carpet. This metaphor would later prove instrumental to his reconceptualization of the decorative as something constitutive rather than superfluous: the weaving of threads, for example, is fundamental to the creation of a textile, but the transverse filaments also generate patterns that give rise to ornamental effects. Encountering this observation in the writings of the late nineteenth-century art historian Alois Riegel, Bennett began to understand that the problem of superficiality in the decorative was less categorical than interpretive. The decorative, in other words, could be conceived as merely a secondary quality—something to be denigrated as a blandishment for the eye and an obstacle to essential comprehension—or it could be recognized as an inherent quality of human-made forms and therefore a fundamental carrier of meaning. The strength of Bennett's conviction on this point evolved over a period of time; no sudden transformation occurred in his work to mark the dawning of his appreciation of the decorative. On the contrary, over the next several years his brooches would hint at an ongoing struggle with the issue.

The decorative, in other words, could be conceived as merely a secondary quality—something to be denigrated as a blandishment for the eye and an obstacle to essential comprehension—or it could be recognized as an inherent quality of human-made forms and therefore a fundamental carrier of meaning.

Rocaille #11 (brooch), 1991-92
enamel, copper, 18k gold
5 x 3"
Photo: Dean Powell

In 1985, when Bennett left his teaching position at Boston University to join the faculty at the State University of New York, New Paltz, the dramatic change from urban to rural environment coaxed him away from the square-format brooch toward the more irregular, organic shapes of what would

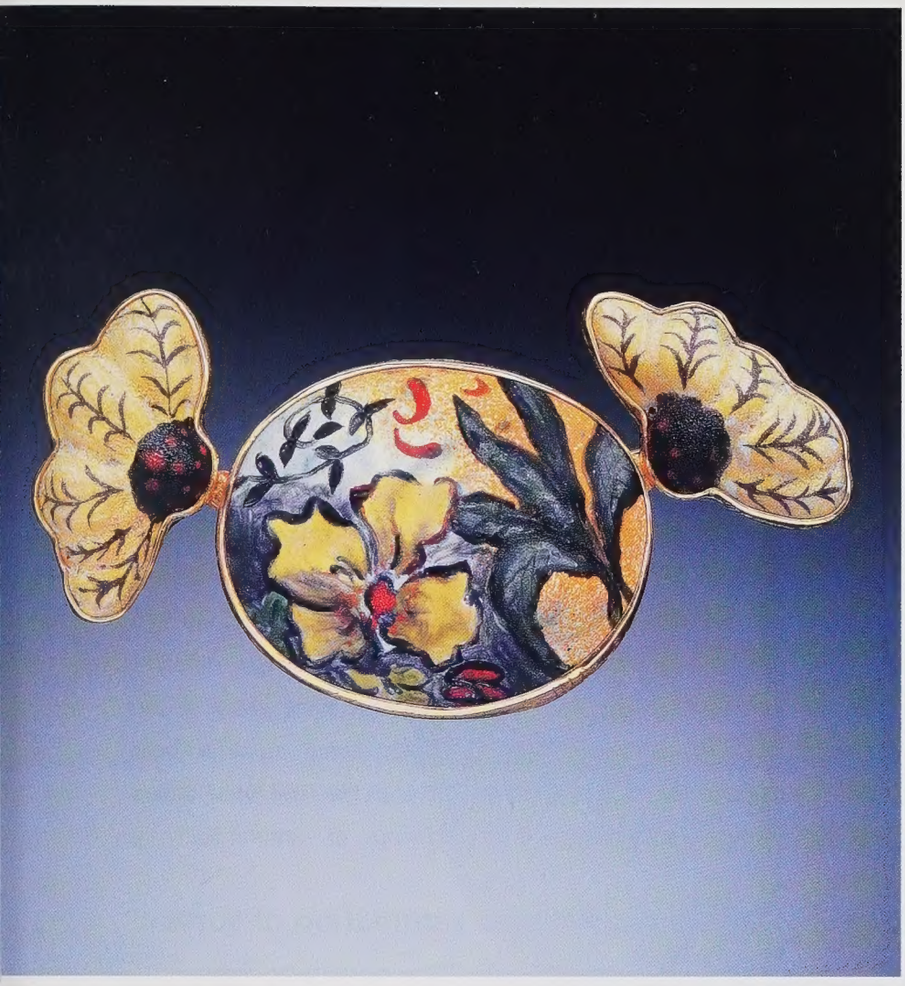
become his "Deer Run" series. In these brooches, the "miniature painting" metaphor began to seem less appropriate, and the frames surrounding his works, though still functionally necessary, increasingly disturbed him. Serendipity, however, presented a solution to the problem when he came across some old electroforming equipment stored away in an art department closet. Recalling that Stanley Lechtzin's works were created in the round and unencumbered by frames, he began exploring the electroforming process, partly under Lechtzin's tutelage during a workshop in New Paltz. The next step was to obtain surfaces on his works similar to those of his earlier brooches. Familiar with June Schwarcz's success with enameling on electroplating, Bennett reasoned that similar results could be achieved on electroformed copper. After months of experimentation and a steady refinement of his skills, he was able to produce hollow enamel-on-copper forms entirely free of any framing element.

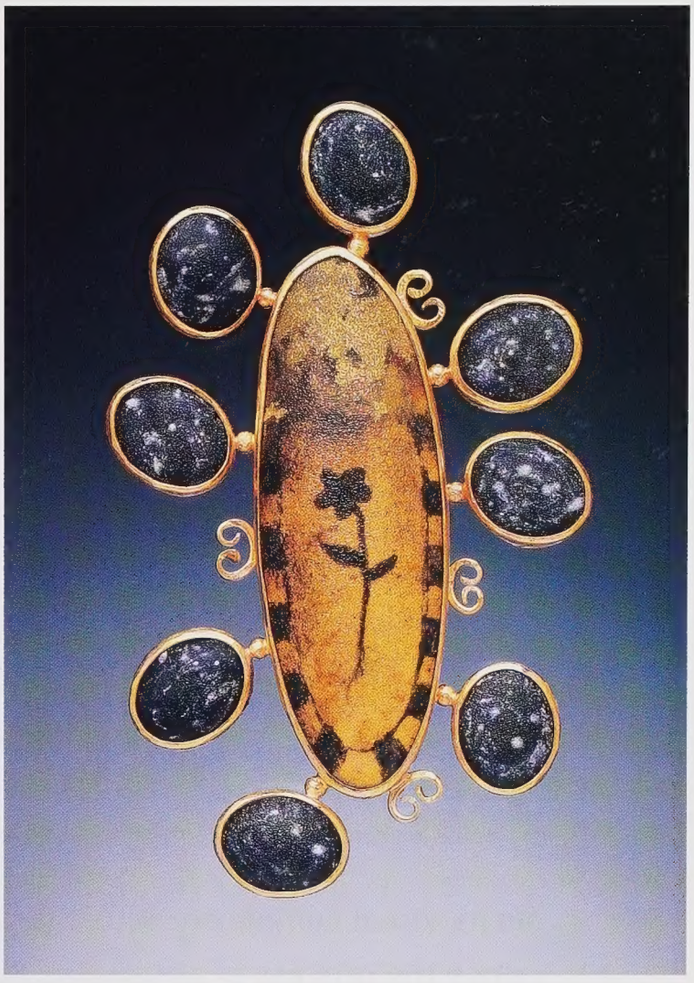
This physical liberation of form from frame constituted a technical triumph for Bennett and brought about an important shift in focus from image to object. At the same time, it raised a new difficulty. No longer attempting to connect his enamel work to contemporary issues in painting and not yet fully acknowledging its status as jewelry, he found himself unable to link his fragmented forms to any established theoretical discourse. From the perspective of the jewelry tradition, his initial solution to this problem would be a compromise: a linking of his work not specifically to the history of the brooch but rather to the more general history of ornamentation. A persistent discomfort with jewelry was evident in his choice to consider ornamentation initially in the context of architecture. Naming his first successful series of enamel-on-electroformed-copper brooches "Rocaille," he evoked the late-eighteenth-century flowering of irregular interior architectural ornament. His inspiration for the series did not, however, derive from the rock, shell, and plant forms of the rococo, but rather from the roots of the style in the Italian Baroque. In that fertile seedbed the status of ornament was exceptionally high, he observes, since the decorative characteristics of form were integrated with structural purpose: "Ornament wasn't treated as a superficial embellishment to a column, for example. Instead, the whole column was an ornament."

Bennett's newfound respect for ornament would ultimately prove crucial to dispelling his lingering ambivalence toward jewelry. By the late 1980s, he was no longer reluctant to acknowledge connections between his work and the larger jewelry-making tradition. In the context of ornament, he argued, jewelry could be connected historically to a fundamental process of humanizing the world, controlling the environment by imposing certain elements of recognizably human design upon it. At the same time, he observed, jewelry as ornament possessed the contrary potential to evoke the ineffable, to touch upon the mysterious and sublime, even the spiritual. Contemplating the demise in the Western world of the conception of ornament as aesthetic, structural, and psycho-spiritual, he, like the P&D artists at the beginning of the decade, turned an appreciative eye to non-Western traditions. Oleg Grabar's influential book *The Meditation of Ornament* directed him in particular toward the connections between medieval Islamic ornament and language. By the mid 1990s, in his "Al Jurjani" and "Safavid" series, he had begun to create groupings of brooches that gravitated toward a specific narrative of ornamental form.

In the context of ornament, he argued, jewelry could be connected historically to a fundamental process of humanizing the world, controlling the environment by imposing certain elements of recognizably human design upon it.

Despite their titles, the series initiating this new phase of Bennett's career did not derive exclusively from consideration of Islamic ornament. Abandoning electroforming for repoussé and deliberately concentrating on presentational format—a gold-framed composition of satellites encircling an implicitly precious central highlight—Bennett explored a more general language of the jewel and the psychology surrounding it. The brooches, though technically jewels themselves, were





top left
Jurjani # 10 (brooch), 1998
enamel, silver, 18k gold
1 x 2 1/2"
Photo: Dean Powell

top right
Jurjani #4 (brooch), 1997-98
enamel, 18k gold, silver
2 3/4 x 1 1/8"
Photo: Dean Powell

left
The Ninth Composed Garden (brooch), 1999
enamel, 18k gold, copper
2 3/4x 2"
Photo: Dean Powell

above
The Sixth Composed Garden (brooch), 1999
enamel, 18k gold
2 3/8 x 2 3/8"
Photo: Dean Powell

intentionally self-conscious about that status. While assuming certain historical conventions of the jewel, they avoided its more obvious traditional traits as a means of developing commentary. For example, they contained no gemstones. The enameled surfaces, though rendered more fluid in terms of tonal and coloristic transitions by Bennett's new use of Limoges painting techniques, remained opaque and often textural through under-firing or etching. Most important, the amoeba-like shapes and irregular spotted patterns of these brooches had more in common with forms in nature than with anything specific to the history of jewelry. This characteristic was illustrative. For Bennett, the visual "taming" of nature, the process through which it has historically been abstracted into decorative elements, is the very essence of ornamentation.

As this key concept emerged in Bennett's work, the "Safavid" series gave way to a more intense concentration on the universals of ornament and the conviction that discerning them required both a literal and figurative shift in vantage. The grid—which has served in art since the 1960s as a device to combat the hierarchies implicit in other, less uniform compositions—became the starting point for a series of intimate wall pieces that Bennett described as mosaics. The "tesserae" of these rectangular works, all one-by-one-inch, enamel-on-copper squares, are united in their relationship to conventional genres of painting, such as landscape or still life. Rather than forming a single image, however, the squares suggest an array of different but equally valid perspectives within the same genre. In the case of landscape, for example, some squares bear conventional horizon-oriented views of the land while others suggest an enlarged aerial vantage or, antithetically, a

In its visual complexity this series could be said to constitute a summation of sorts, since the process of arriving at such a broadly inclusive mosaic-like scenario for image-making has been the underlying narrative of Bennett's career.

Mosaic Scenarios #6 (brooch), 2005
enamel, 18k gold, copper
2 x 2"
Photo: Dean Powell

Mosaic Scenarios #3 (brooch), 2005
enamel, 18k gold, copper
2 1/4 x 2 1/8"
Photo: Dean Powell

concentration on minutiae. Not only do the tesserae as a group create an undeniably decorative surface, they imply that the distinction between ornamentation and mimesis is not one of kind but rather of degree. The decorative is tacitly presented as a highly abstract mode of representation in a gradated continuum that includes the intensely naturalistic. The picture is complicated by the influence of a spectrum of potential styles, which crosses the continuum at every point along its scope. In these intersections lie the fundamentals of a grid on which all varieties of images might conceivably be plotted.

The literalness of this grid, which imparted to Bennett's wall pieces both a compositional rigidity and a quasi-scientific feeling of empirical investigation, has softened substantially in his newest series of brooches and necklaces, the "Mosaic Scenarios." In these painterly enamel works the mosaic, like the grid that formerly conferred regularity upon it, has largely transformed from material constituent to metaphor, rhetorically invoking the concept of integrated fragments that harmonize with one another while maintaining their discrete identities. In the "Mosaic Scenarios" the accurately observational meets the romantically improvisational; the minutely focused interacts with the macroscopic; and, most importantly, the decorative shares space equally with the naturalistic. In its visual complexity this series could be said to constitute a summation of sorts, since the process of arriving at such a broadly inclusive mosaic-like scenario for image-making has been the underlying narrative of Bennett's career. His work has passed from the paradigm of modern painting to the tradition of jewelry; from the blankness of monochromy to the voluptuousness of colorism; from the starkly monumental to the intimately engaging; from the severity of minimalism to the amplified sensuality of the decorative—all without recourse to the discriminatory cast of hierarchical thinking or a devaluation of past perspectives. It might be said that Bennett's career *is* the metaphorical mosaic: less a discrete line of progress punctuated by negation and revolution than an expanding and ever-more-inclusive field of harmonious yet diverse and self-sufficient forms. ◘

Glen R. Brown is associate professor of art history at Kansas State University.

Nancy Worden

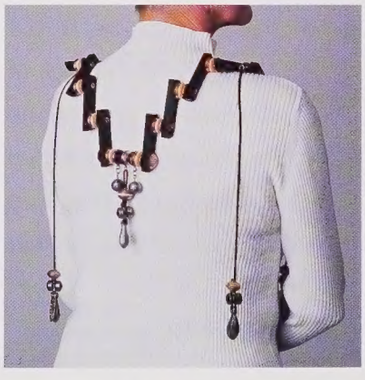
Excavations

by Matthew Kangas

It is most interesting just how important figuration, storytelling and the invention of a modern folk art have been in North American jewelry. . . Witty artists can use the commonplace and the cheap to wring emotions.

—Helen W. Drutt English, *Jewelry of Our Time* (1995)

The art of Nancy Worden is both a part of a regional artistic identity—Pacific Northwest found-object jewelry—and an independent aesthetic project of her own. While her earliest works were brooches in the vein of her friend and teacher, Central Washington University professor Ken Cory (1943-1994), her recent pieces take the form of necklaces, seen most recently at Seattle's William Traver Gallery in her solo exhibition, "Modern Artifacts." Never working serially, Worden conceives of each piece as an autonomous symbolic object. Elements serve dual purposes of ornament and meaning. Like her peers in the area, many of whom come under the rubric "Ellensburg Funky" (*Metalsmith*, Fall 1995), Worden has rejected precious materials and abstract Euro-imagery in favor of objects that excavate popular culture, American history, and current events. That she manages to do so in necklaces of spectacular beauty that steer clear of ideology or propaganda is a considerable achievement. Humor, social criticism, and an endearing use of materials often available at the hardware store or antique shop roots her work in American art and celebrates the lives and circumstances of ordinary Americans.



Model view, *Lifting Weights* (detail)

Shockingly, Helen W. Drutt English omitted Worden from her epoch-making survey *Jewelry of Our Time: Art, Ornament and Obsession* (Rizzoli, 1995), while highlighting other West Coast Funksters like Ramona Solberg, Laurie Hall, Ron Ho, Kiff Slemmons and Ken Cory. At least ten years younger than the original Ellensburg Funky group, Worden is achieving maturity a decade after Drutt's book appeared. Perhaps a late bloomer, Worden now seems to have been inspired by a clientele approaching middle age. Her ideal necklace wearer must be bold, confident, humorous and accomplished. Or if she is not, wearing one of Worden's "modern artifacts" may render her so.

Lifting Weights, 2003
silver, 14k gold, bone, ebony,
lead and glass
17 x 10 3/4 x 1"

clockwise from top
Transfer of Power, 2005
silver, copper, glass, leather
artificial hair, acrylic
16 x 13 1/2 x 3/4"

The Leash, 2003
silver, nickel, brass, faux fur
pearls, glass and steel
10 1/2 x 8 x 2 1/2"
Boardman Family Collection

Ereshkigal's Hook (Exosquelette #3), 2004
copper, glass, leather
20 x 1 1/4 x 2 1/2"

With the death of Solberg in 2005 and the aging of the "Ellensburg Funky" crowd, Worden stands to succeed her colleagues as its leader, as recognition by art critics, curators, and collectors of her art grows and spreads beyond Seattle. Besides the use of found objects artfully rearranged—coins, acrylic nail extensions, eyeglass lenses, hair curlers—Worden reintroduces tighter, somewhat more technically complicated settings that draw her closer to jewelry precedents of the 1970s: the electroforming of Stanley Lechtzin, the intricate clasps of Solberg, the large-scale, sculptural presence of the Dutch jewelry masters of the 1970s.

Worden wrote of the origins of "Modern Artifacts" that "the quest for wholeness and a voice is an initiation every adult woman must face as an antidote to what our culture teaches us a 'nice' woman should or should not do. These pieces incorporate small objects from the everyday lives of women to build structures that are intended to empower the wearer." Like magical talismans, Worden's necklaces have a visibly transformative power when adorning the wearer.

One of Solberg's prime contributions was the significance of the clasp. It could be simple, complex, integrated, separate or detachable entirely, but it became an important element of each neckpiece. In Worden's case, the clasp's importance has continued into the second half of each piece, in how it appears on the wearer's back. Closer to armor while still acting as ornament, the new necklaces extend beyond the neck and chest onto the back so that sculptural properties—volume, mass, profile—are reinforced and the overall meaning of each work is better conveyed.

Wrapping a mass of metal, fur, plastic, glass, and even stones and pebbles around one's neck requires chutzpah, positing a proud and confident woman who not only needs the body (and back) to bring it off, but one who can address audience comments and feedback.

An artist in transition, Worden's work deserves a deeper analysis than it has heretofore received. More American in content than her globetrotting elders Ho and Solberg, Worden's art is often about the expressions of minority cultures within the U.S. Worden has shifted from the subjectivity and autobiography of her prior art ("My artwork is a response to specific events in my life," she once said) to a more outward-looking, socially engaged and distanced feminism. Although feminist ideologues told women in the 1970s that "the personal is the political," this connection did not always lead to art of broader reference that could be enjoyed by men as well as women.

"Modern Artifacts" may be triggered by the artist's social observations of older women's delights and plights (Worden is 51), but they proceed to become protective shields and conversation-starters that not every wearer can handle. Wrapping a mass of metal, fur, plastic, glass, and even stones and pebbles around one's neck requires chutzpah, positing a proud and confident woman who not only needs the body (and back) to bring it off, but one who can address audience comments and feedback.

Much more intense in person and in her writings than one would suspect of the creator of such entertaining work,

Transfer of Power (2005), for example, has an inner core of refashioned, souvenir beaded Indian belts that continue down the back, climaxing with a tuft of artificial hair. The tail of *Transfer of Power* slopes down from the shoulder. And *Ereshkigal's Hook* (2004) has 10 tufted leather balls set in electroformed copper descending from an eyeball-like clasp that echoes the inner core of the front.

The actual lead part of *The Leash* (2003) dangles a dog leash loop handle at the end of a long strand of pearls punctuated by thrift store fur. Here the back section can be activated either by the wearer or an assertive partner. Drutt spoke in *Jewelry of Our Time* of the fetish dimension in a lot of American jewelry and *The Leash* is as close as Worden comes to invoking ritual through a fetish-like object.

Women's quest for strength and fitness is gently satirized in *Lifting Weights* (2003), a perhaps overly complicated piece that

The Good Omen, 2004
silver, steel, concrete and pebbles
20 x 2 1/2 x 1/2"

sets weights in the form of small silver, lead, and gold weights on the wearer's shoulders. By slipping the necklace on, the wearer can work out while walking at the same time. She is projecting a commanding image. Ebony and ivory form the amusing links that echo barbell or weightlifting machines.

Not for the faint of heart, then, Worden's necklaces balance adornment with visible expressions of women's power. With much humbler materials like concrete and pebbles, as well as silver-cast ears, *The Good Omen* (2004) gets closer to the rougher, possibly more masculine look of Worden's latest works. Its stone fragments alternate with small ears attuned to hearing good omens. Symbolically "ears to the ground," *The Good Omen* is ignited by the contrasting femininity of the wearer. Like a site-related sculpture, its impact shifts depending upon the wearer's appearance. The pebbles embedded in concrete are absurd surrogates for the expected gems or precious stones set in gold or silver. Worden is among the most extreme of the Ellensburg Funky group in her embrace of the street as an inspiration. By honoring pebbles, she privileges the mundane. It is her most "blue collar" collar to date.

Two final necklaces, *Frozen Dreams* (2004) and *Brigandine for Ishtar* (2005), offer opposite faces or sensibilities for the woman unafraid of making a spectacle of herself. One is transparent and airy; the other is opaque and brooding. With both works, Worden is expanding the province of jewelry's possibilities. Like her teacher at the University of Georgia, Gary Noffke, Worden's technical construction may be complicated but it gives an appearance of informality and American make-do or know-how. Not that they could be confused with high school jewelry projects (as in Laurie Hall), but construction is treated as

Frozen Dreams, 2004
silver, copper, nickel and acrylic
17 x 14 x 2 1/4"

Brigandine for Ishtar, 2005
copper, brass, nickel, steel, glass and found objects
5 1/2 x 14 x 3 1/4"

what is necessary rather than what will impress with fussiness. As a result, the direct materiality of the work is immediately evident.

Taking the eyeglass form used so effectively in her earlier brooches (*Resolution to Lose*, 1992; *Mixed Messages*, 1993), *Frozen Dreams* aligns 50 polarized clear lenses on a silver chain. Each lens has slight cuts at one end to imitate Victorian glass engraving. In fact, the entire piece could also be seen as a riposte to Seattle's ubiquitous glass art scene. Within the chain is a larger glass pendant surrounded by chunkier glass and nickel-plated silver components. Two necklaces in one, *Frozen Dreams* is icy and tactile at the same time, evocative of historic and modern jewelry conventions simultaneously. One further element of parody comes to mind: diamonds. Flattened yet faceted by crude carving, each lens spoofs a precious part of a diamond necklace. In a sense regal and street-savvy, *Frozen Dreams* operates on many levels. Worden's excavations here are at their most complex pitch.

As this nation settles into an alarmingly protracted war abroad and stories of inadequate tank and body armor spread, they eerily recall the stories of shoddy rifles used in Vietnam that led to the deaths of hundreds of young men. Worden has created her own symbolic body armor for those she calls "the sons and daughters of Iraq," U.S. Army soldiers. *Brigandine for Ishtar* follows from *Ereshkigal's Hook*; both works refer to Babylonian mythology, the culture originated in what is present-day Iraq. The former was the goddess of love and war, who unwittingly brought about the death of her beloved. She was chastised by her sister, Ereshkigal, goddess of the underworld, and forced to remain in hell until rescued by a hermaphroditic beast.

Alluding as well to archaeological excavation sites and their precious loot, this work has a potent, current meaning that is sure to survive any contemporary conflict and act as one of the most important anti-war artworks to emerge from this misguided international conflict.

Brigandine for Ishtar is one of Worden's most complex and symbolically layered works to date. Resembling armor for chest and back, it recalls bulletproof vests, medieval shields, and central Asian saddlebags drenched in beads. Possibly unisex as well in terms of wearability, *Brigandine* (the word alludes to an army subdivision) expands Worden's province of empowerment in the face of an increasingly powerless U.S.-led coalition force facing implacable foes in Iraq. Alluding as well to archaeological excavation sites and their precious loot, this work has a potent, current meaning that is sure to survive any contemporary conflict and act as one of the most important anti-war artworks to emerge from this misguided international conflict. Women may become empowered as soldiers as easily as men; they are also, for the first time, just as vulnerable. Seen in the context of Worden's milder necklaces and her earlier work that dealt with weight loss, for example, *Brigandine for Ishtar* may herald a new period of political seriousness, taking American art jewelry into a realm of international social consciousness. If so, Nancy Worden is sure to be on the front line.

Model view, *Brigandine for Ishtar* (detail)

Matthew Kangas, a Seattle-based writer, is the author of the recently published, *epicenter: Essays on North American Art* and *William Cumming: The Image of Consequence*.

All photography by Rex Rystedt

Images courtesy William Traver Gallery, Seattle

A Time and a Place

Miriam Haskell and the Rise of American Costume Jewelry

by Marjorie Simon

The year is 1960. The photograph suggests intimacy, as movie star Joan Crawford leans toward the camera, only the top half of her body in the frame. Her bare shoulders are swathed in a bristling fur-piece of midnight blue and black, punctuated by dazzling white gloves, her eyebrows arched like two woolly caterpillars predicting a snowy winter. On her neck and earlobes are, respectively, a four-strand imitation pearl necklace, and a pair of sizable conical pearl earclips.[1] Twenty-five years have passed since she was photographed at full length wearing a black suit whose skirt stopped just above the ankle, holding the lead on a large, fluffy white dog, and wearing an oversized floral brooch, looking, according to F. Scott Fitzgerald, like the quintessential flapper. In both photos a large black hat frames her face like a halo dropped out of a Medieval tableau, and in both Miss Crawford wears jewelry designed by Miriam Haskell.

Attributed to Freud: history is over-determined. The reason Miriam Haskell's jewelry occupies a seminal place in American costume jewelry is that it emerged at a particular intersection of art, commerce, and accident of history. Haskell's success depended as much on her own skills as on the social and historical events of the second quarter of the twentieth century, that is, the period between the wars, the Great Depression, and of course, World War II and its aftermath.

An example of a watercolor sketch used to advertise Miriam Haskell's jewelry from 1926-1952.

In 1924, when twenty-five-year-old Miriam Haskell left the mid-West for New York City, Calvin Coolidge was president, the Brooklyn Museum was recently completed, and the *New Yorker* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines were both in their second year of publication. Films were silent, the Varsity Drag was the dance of favor, the jukebox a recent invention. *Mrs. Dalloway, The Great Gatsby,* and *Mein Kampf* were among the books published that year. The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum were yet to be built.[2]

With $500 from her father, Haskell opened a boutique near the McAlpin Hotel, at the time, "the largest hotel in the world."[3] A few months later, she opened a second shop on West 57th Street. Within a few short years, however, the stock market crashed and the country fell into the Great Depression. How Miriam Haskell not only stayed in business but thrived at this time is a tale of luck and pluck, business acumen, and personal will.

Parure of Turquoise Beads,
ca. early 1940s
braided metal mesh wire,
silk thread, pot metal leaves,
rhinestones, turquoise-
colored glass beads, plastic
necklace length 14"
dress clip length 1 1/2"

Archives of Miriam Haskell base metal castings used continuously to the present time.

Necklace, ca. 1930s
glass beads and leaves, gilt metal chain
length 15"

A new bourgeoisie had emerged in the period between the wars, along with the nascent labor movement and urban (and Black) migration away from small towns and farms. Haskell was not alone in forsaking the cultural cul-de-sac of Indiana for the thoroughfare of New York. During this period newly developed technologies were finding their way into the decorative arts. The invention of Bakelite in 1909 had invigorated the lingering botanical and nature imagery of Art Nouveau, as a world of color-saturated fruits, flowers, animals, and geometric forms enlivened the jewelry vocabulary. Duchamp and the Dada movement had already introduced the idea of conflating high and low art in the use of alternative materials.

In 1922, the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen also led to new colors and motifs, as illustrated by Haskell's 1929 advertisement in *Women's Wear Daily* announcing "The Jester" necklace, and "the Cluster." The advertisement's description of the many non-precious materials foreshadows Haskell's unique choices: "Many Original Combinations. In necklaces and bracelets of wood, bone, and ivory. Designs and colorings inspired by the countries of Southern Europe and Northern Africa." "Immediate Delivery" was promised.[4] In the days when Paris reigned as the undisputed center of the fashion world, the absence of copyright laws allowed borrowing from established houses such as Dior, Chanel, and Schiaparelli. But costume jewelry was also popularized by Chanel's "real fake jewelry" of the 1920s. Shedding the "old order" and welcoming the new became an American prerogative.

By concentrating on original design, affordable and unusual materials, and creative craftsmanship, Haskell found a market for her designs throughout the 1930s and 1940s. At the height of the Depression Haskell wintered in Miami, where she opened another boutique, much favored by vacationing "ladies" wishing to accessorize their resortwear.

Without a doubt Miriam Haskell's greatest business decision was to hire window dresser Frank Hess away from Macy's, where she had seen his displays every day on her way to work. It has been argued that Hess's designs for Haskell in the 1930s and 40s have never been equaled for their verve, originality, and versatility. Hess used masses of alternative materials, including the new plastics. He quickly moved away from reliance on traditional (i.e. French) designs, particularly in his innovative and even shocking color combinations. He also developed production runs that re-used and reconfigured a "family" of design elements.

Throughout the 1930s Miriam Haskell, with Frank Hess's designs, injected a new American optimism into the industry. As the century rolled on, movies began to talk and sing, and Haskell developed a following among Hollywood stars such as Joan Crawford and Lucille Ball. It has been suggested that one of Haskell's lovers, Bernard Gimbel, of department store fame, may have been responsible for her opening a boutique at Saks Fifth Avenue in 1936.[5] During the Depression, Haskell's clients

were middle-class women who "wanted to liven up last year's outfit with some pretty jewellery, and...the formerly rich who could not get used to doing without jewellery altogether."[6] According to current chief designer Millie Petronzio, Haskell kept her business alive by calling on wealthy socialites in their homes and offering to create personalized jewelry to go with their wardrobes, in order to re-use and disguise their old clothes.[7]

Haskell built rapport with buyers, and was willing to spend money to maintain a certain aura about her product. In the days before fashion photography became part of the marketing landscape, she advertised by commissioning watercolor posters in which women were portrayed in day dresses, suits, hats and gloves (not evening attire) wearing somewhat oversized Haskell jewelry. The paintings were mounted on easels in the entrance to the showroom. Today the famous watercolors ring the Fifth Avenue showroom. At the seasonal showings buyers were wined and dined, pending a minimum order of $500—a large sum in the 1930s. Retailers were allowed to set whatever retail prices their market would bear. In an interview given to the *Miami Herald* in 1934, Haskell saw her designs as inextricable from America itself in the years following the upheaval of World War I. She answered the question "Why do I make jewellery?" by suggesting that the "new civilization" was "a continent populated with a people seeking the ideal by surrounding itself with a new artistic sense."[8]

She answered the question "Why do I make jewellery?" by suggesting that the "new civilization" was "a continent populated with a people seeking the ideal by surrounding itself with a new artistic sense."

Though Haskell's designs were undoubtedly inventive, by themselves they would not necessarily have transformed American accessories into the huge and vital costume jewelry industry it has become. It took World War II to disperse European-based design and manufacturing, and inadvertently give a boost to American markets. The enormous dislocation of people from Eastern Europe had a number of unintended results. Beginning in 1933, German and Czech Jews fleeing Europe brought skilled craftsmanship, tools, and even some equipment to America. Soon, sources of raw materials disappeared, since stones cut in Idar-Oberstein and Bohemian glass were not available after the German occupation. Americans, insulated from war at home, began to plumb the American southwest for design and materials, particularly in terms of color. And although metal disappeared from jewelry once the United States entered the war, as white metal went to the war effort, there was work for skilled craftsmen fabricating plastic parts. After the war, the high quality of these stampings and other components contributed to Haskell's dominance.

The war also disrupted the flow of couture fashion by isolating Paris from the rest of the world. Literally cut off and shut down, neither clothing nor clothing ideas could survive German occupation. Even in the United States, the war effort affected the clothing industry. American designers, removed from their design source, concentrated on sportswear, thus creating a fresh marketing niche.[9] On March 8, 1942, the War Production Board issued regulation #L-85, which regulated every aspect of clothing, eliminating men's vests, pant cuffs, and elbow patches, and streamlining womens' skirts to a slim, short silhouette.[10] These simpler, unadorned suits provided the perfect canvas for Haskell's festoons, clips, and brooches made of non-precious materials such as "wood, leather, shells, flotsam and [beach] stones, ...berries, seeds and beans."[11]

After the war, hemlines dropped and fabric yardage became voluptuous. Women may have been expected to return their focus to the home, but they still wanted to dress up and accessorize. Haskell responded by "creating a new type of

Bracelet, ca. 1940s
woven fabric, wooden beads
length 8"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

jewellery whose value lay in its workmanship...[such as] glass beads from Gablonz in Bohemia (now Jablonec and Nisou in the Czech Republic) and Venetian beads."[12]

Haskell was unstinting in her material choices and canny in her choice of designers. She was considered an imperious and distant leader of a sizable design firm. Evidently both Haskell and Hess maintained some distance from the other workers, who at various times numbered between 15 and 60. Production was organized along the following lines: the head designer would choose a motif, perhaps a butterfly or a daisy, and produce the "evening jewels," or the more important pieces, what might be considered one-of-a-kinds. As chief designer, Hess created the prototypes and submitted them to Haskell, who would choose which models would be produced. Then Hess's assistant would create the day-wear: "simple brooches, earrings, and necklaces" for the production line. The ingenious manipulation of cast elements allowed for a variety of related pieces, creating a recognizable Haskell "look." A collection typically included clips, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings. Occasionally outside contract workers would be used for stringing pearls.[13]

The ingenious manipulation of cast elements allowed for a variety of related pieces, creating a recognizable Haskell "look."

Haskell's collections have always used masses of pearls, in ropes and clusters, regardless of the other seasonal themes. Her pearls, admittedly fake, were made by the Niki factory, a now extinct Japanese firm with whom Haskell had an exclusive relationship. They were all made by hand for her. Like each of Haskell's elements, the pearls and gemstones were set by hand, and the metal stampings were plated in a lengthy and complex process resulting in a unique antiqued finish known as Russian gold.[14]

Unfortunately, by the 1950s Haskell appeared to suffer from an unnamed but disabling mental disorder, for which she was eventually hospitalized. Subsequently the company was sold outside the family and Haskell herself denied access to the company. Frank Hess continued to run the business and it was around this time that the jewelry began to be signed. Previously, all of Haskell's work had been unsigned, with only an oval hang tag for identification. Between 1948 and 1950, the Haskell logo evolved from a horseshoe bearing the full name Miriam Haskell, to an oval after 1948, then to simply Haskell, then to Miriam Haskell marching around a circle, like a Levi-Strauss rivet. During the war years a flying dove of peace was used as a clasp.

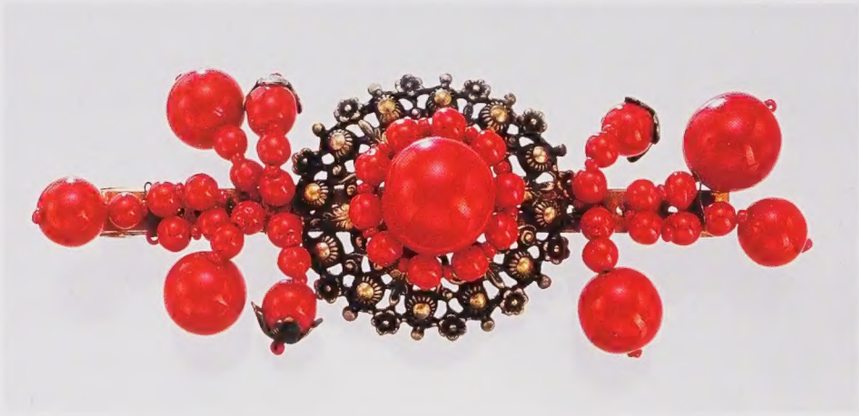
Miriam Haskell ended her life in 1981, in a nursing home in Hamilton, Kentucky, and was buried in Louisville. Frank Hess retired in 1960 and the company changed hands numerous times until 1980 when designer Camille (Millie) Petronzio became chief designer. Petronzio remains chief designer today, still proud and committed to Haskell's reputation for integrity, as, in fact, were other previous designers Robert Clark, Peter Raines, and Frank Vrba. Their collective stewardship adheres to the principles Haskell established long ago.

Coral Parure Brooch, ca. late 1930s (back view)
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

What continues to distinguish Miriam Haskell jewelry, and makes identification possible despite decades of unsigned work, is the quality of her components, the choice of materials, and the methods of construction. Haskell's jewelry, while clearly designed for production, is remarkable for the amount of handwork involved in its fabrication. The original metal stampings, thematically organized and catalogued, now line the halls of the company's New York headquarters. The hundreds of perforated flowers, circles, fans, and filigree of all sorts continue to form the basis for weavings of faux pearls and other glass beads, and are still hand tied, despite the challenge of finding skilled bench workers. Approximately 70 percent of the stampings are made locally in factories on Long Island and

Necklace and Brooch, ca. 1930s
wood, glass, braided fabric
brooch 2 1/4 x 2 1/4"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Coral Parure, ca. late 1930s
coral, brass, glass beads
Photo: Ralph Gabriner



from top
Cherry Fibula Brooch, ca. 1920s-30s
brass, glass beads
4 x 1 1/4"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Cherry Fibula Brooch, (back view)
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Necklace, ca. 1940s
brass, glass
approx. length 14"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

opposite page
"Turquoise" Necklace, ca. early 1940s
brass, glass beads
length approx. 21"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Providence, Rhode Island, and the rest are made in Europe. Today, Miriam Haskell Jewelry is sold in specialty boutiques and major department stores such as Macy's, Nordstrom's, Saks Fifth Avenue and Lord and Taylor.

The illustrated samples of vintage Haskell designs reveal the hallmarks of her classic collections.[15] These include the perforated metal back with beaded elements sewn on, the woven cord of bracelets and necklaces, and the lavish use of extremely high quality non-precious materials, particularly before the jewelry came to be signed. A beautiful example is the 1940s necklace with red glass globes shown here. The classical rope chain and hanging elements reminiscent of Grecian urns convey antiquity and modernity at the same time. Produced in a number of colors, it clearly references Greek and Roman themes, with the comforting familiarity of recognizable jewelry brought up to date with base metal and glass instead of gemstones.

The fibula pin back of a classic Haskell brooch (as in the illustrated example with cherry red beads) is a craftsman's dream. Although manufactured, it is clearly hand-constructed. Typical of Haskell's attention to function, the pinstem does not flop all the way back, but has a built-in "stopper." The perforated pin back shows how the fine wires are twisted together, holding the brilliant red "cherry" beads onto the backing. The brooch in the coral parure also has a perforated back with wires twisted on in a similar pattern.[16] The filigree pieces are a part of the same "family" of shapes, and plated with Haskell's signature "old Russian gold." The turquoise necklace, like a small "festoon," is also carefully assembled. The beads are threaded directly onto the metal through the back of the gold-tone pendant. Each metal element is substantial and nothing is perfunctory. Miriam Haskell was responsible for some of the most original jewelry designs of the early twentieth century. Although she was not, strictly speaking, a designer, she gets credit for the whole package, even though it has been said that attributing the designs to the business owner "is like saying that Pope Julius II painted the Sistine Chapel."[17] No matter. Miriam Haskell did for costume jewelry what other major designers have done for couture, shoes, or home furnishings—created a beautiful, durable, and desirable product in multiples, for appreciative and knowledgeable consumers—and she deserves the credit.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer based in New Jersey.

Produced in a number of colors, it clearly references Greek and Roman themes, with the comforting familiarity of recognizable jewelry brought up to date with base metal and glass instead of gemstones.

1 Deanna Farneti Cera, *The Jewels of Miriam Haskell* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: Antique Collector's Club, 1997), p. 178.
2 James Trager, *The People's Chronology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), p.p. 770-779.
3 http://www.adventurepluspublishing.com/postcard 8d.htm
4 Carla Ginelli Brunialti and Roberto Brunialti, *American Costume Jewelry 1930-1950* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1997), p. 251. Ad from *Women's Wear Daily*, 21 March 1929.
5 Haskell never married, but had affairs with Florenz Ziegfeld, and, most painfully, with John Hertz, whose family invented the rental car, and who subsequently married the younger, more beautiful, Myrna Loy.
6 Farnetti Cera, p. 19.
7 Personal communication with Millie Petronzio, July 2005.
8 Farnetti Cera, p.16.
9 Carol Nolan, "Ladies' Fashions of the 1940s": http://murrayonhawaii.com/nolan/fashionhistory_1940ladies.html
10 http://home.cfl.rr.com/featherweight/board.htm
11 Farnetti Cera, p. 30
12 Ibid., p.15.
13 Ibid., p. 15.
14 Joanne Dubbs Ball and Dorothy Hehl Torem, *Masterpieces of Costume Jewelry* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub. Ltd., 1996), p. 94.
15 See Cathy Gordon and Sheila Pamfiloff, *Miriam Haskell Jewelry* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2004). Excellent details of Haskell construction may also be found at http://imageevent.com/blueboi/unsignedhaskellclipspins. Millie Petronzio considers Gordon's book to be the definitive volume on identifying and collecting Haskell.
16 "Parure: a set of jewelled ornaments decorated en suite or made of the same variety of gemstone, and intended to be worn at the same time, such as a necklace, bracelets, brooch, and ear-rings...." Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981. Reprinted 1990), p. 227.
17 Chandler Burr, "The Scent of the Nile," *The New Yorker* (March 14, 2005): 78.

What's New?

Observations on Innovation

by Tim McCrieght

Like many other metalsmiths, I am a time traveler. I am writing this on a computer, skipping over to the Internet to search the web as I go, while across the studio I have an anvil and hammers that haven't changed in the last 500 years. In the course of the day, I toggle between poles that are centuries apart, regularly using ancient tools with twenty-first-century techniques. The situation is familiar to jewelers around the world as we embrace the rich legacy of our past while simultaneously extending our reach to encompass the latest innovation. In a universe of such extreme contrasts, the very concept of "new" comes into question.

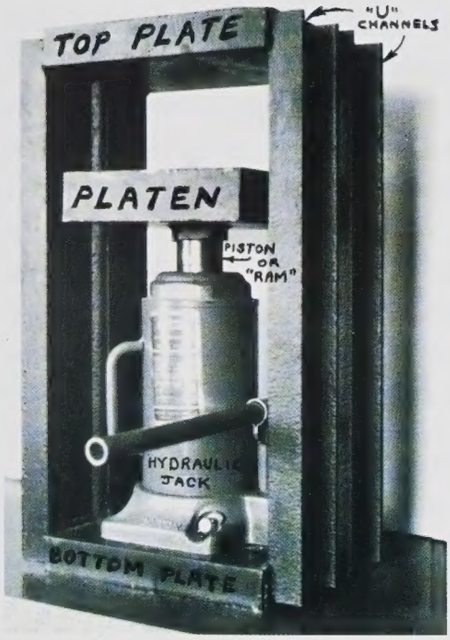
Over the past three decades, I've seen quite a few innovations in our field, and as the founding director of the Precious Metal Clay Guild, I have firsthand knowledge of one of them. I am struck at how fortunate we metalsmiths are to have a wealth of creative people, a culture of sharing, and an infrastructure that provides the apparatus for communication. Our community is blessed with a history that is not only long but also well documented in its recent chapters. This magazine and the organization behind it have provided a huge service, not only in dispersing information, but also in recording the process. Here are a few of the techniques and tools that were brought to our community either at a SNAG Conference or in this magazine (often both): Mokume gane, hydraulic die forming, anti-clastic raising, foldforming, reactive metal anodizing, shell forms, PMC, photoetching, and CAD/CAM.

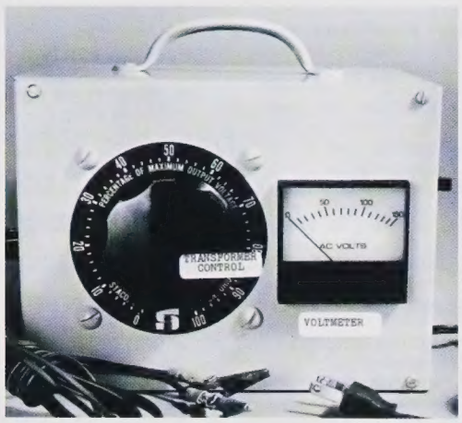
Each of these has a story to tell, but space allows only a summary of three of these breakthroughs. Since I've been involved in bringing a new material into the field, I've become interested in the evolution of other techniques as they make their way from novelty to become an established component of metalsmithing. Even those things we now consider well established, like brilliant cut gems or bottled fuel gas, were once quirky newcomers. It is tempting to search for patterns that recur when a new material or process appears on the scene. I've discovered several recurring themes, including the caliber of the early work, the mix of science and artistic mindsets, and a range of response that spans a wide arc from critic to true believer.

Hydraulic Die Forming

Like many readers, a mention of hydraulic die forming conjures for me a sterling version of the Beatles' Yellow Submarine. In issue 15 of *Goldsmiths Journal* (precursor to *Metalsmith*), a San Francisco lawyer named Marc Paisin shared his plans for a homemade press that was operated with a car jack. The idea was perfectly poised for its time: It was quirky, required some creative tinkering, and at the same time brought an aura of professionalism to jewelers who were looking for production methods appropriate for a small studio. The use of silhouette dies was just gaining a foothold, and this new contraption took that investigation to a new level. Now we could make puffy hearts faster than ever!

I don't think we'll ever know how many people used Marc's plans to make their own press, but we do know that the evolution of this technology took a clear and important step in 1989 when Susan Kingsley, a metalsmith who pioneered work in die forming and taught some of the first workshops in the process, asked an engineer named Lee Marshall to build a frame from those plans.





left to right, top to bottom
Marc Paisin's homemade hydraulic press illustrated in *Goldsmiths Journal*, 1988.

Robert Grey Kaylor
Bracelet, 1998
sterling and gold (die formed)
3 1/2 x 4 1/2"

James Brent Ward
Dragonfly, ca. 1978
titanium, sterling

Transformer (detail), published by Joseph Hall in *Goldsmiths Journal #24*, 1979.

Bill Seeley
Brooch, 1979
The artist's first piece made in titanium with copper setting, hot formed and heat colored
length 1 1/4"

Christopher Darway
Untitled, 2003
fine silver (PMC), window glass
2 1/2 x 4"

Claire Holliday
Crystal Series 1 (brooch), 2002
fine silver (PMC), gold
height 3 1/4"

His background in science and toolmaking told him that the press could be improved, so he made some modifications and produced a press frame that was lighter and more versatile. He started a company called Bonny Doon Engineering, and introduced his new frame at the 1990 SNAG conference in San Francisco. Today Lee estimates that there are about 1600 Bonny Doon presses in studios around the world. Susan Kingsley continued her educational efforts, first through a chapter in a book called *Metals Technic* in 1992 and a year later in her own book, *Hydraulic Die Forming for Jewelers & Metalsmiths*.

Imagine walking into Marc Paisins's studio in the mid 1970s and encountering his chunky device made of threaded rods and steel slabs. You could be forgiven for the puzzled look on your face—that's typically the way it is with new ideas. Yet now it is a rare metals department that does not have a press installed in the workshop. An index of the importance of the press to the field is the fact that new techniques and materials are quickly fed into its jaws. Die forming experiments have been done on foldforms, metal clay, and micro-folded sheets.

Reactive Metals

Another example of what happens when creative minds, entrepreneurial spirit, and dedication to an idea merge can be found in the decorative use of reactive metals. Even those of us who don't use titanium or niobium in our work are familiar with these lightweight metals with their seductive scarlets, chilly greens, and electric blues. Titanium and niobium are now firmly established in the jeweler's arsenal; so much so that we might forget how new the materials and techniques are. These exotic metals were harnessed for use in the aerospace industry, so how is it that you and I know about them?

The first mention in the jewelry field was in a paper prepared for the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths by James Brent Ward in September 1978. This caught the eye of a handful of American jewelers, including Joseph F. Hall. In June 1979 he published the results of his research in *Goldsmiths Journal, issue #24*, including plans to make an anodizing unit. Two years later he brought his work to the SNAG conference in Lawrence, Kansas, where a guy named Bill Seeley got his first view. Bill was in graduate school at the University of Kansas, and for him it was love at first sight. "The technique brought together several interests for me, including my science background and my love of gadgets," he says. Bill wrote his thesis on reactive metals, and in the process not only learned the science of anodizing, but also developed contacts at the relatively few suppliers who dealt in titanium and niobium. Because minimum order levels were high, Seeley needed to purchase more material than he could use himself, and this led him to sell to others. As his circle of friends and customers expanded, he started a company called Reactive Metals Studio. From a modest beginning in a corner of his studio, Bill's business has grown to an enterprise that boasts a customer base of 10,000. Those who know him would agree that Bill combines curiosity, entrepreneurial spirit, and a passion for sharing. New innovations seem to arrive in the hands of people with these qualities.

Precious Metal Clay (PMC)

Only a few years ago, mention of PMC brought questioning looks, but now it is earning a serious presence in the field. Like die forming and reactive metals, metal clay offers unique challenges and opportunities.

In August 1994 I was invited to sit in on a meeting with Ron Pearson and two men from Japan who wanted to discuss a new product their company had recently produced. Sitting around the kitchen table at Ron's house in Deer Isle, Maine, these two men told us about a material that was made of fine silver but could be worked like modeling clay. They had brought dozens of samples, mostly familiar charms that did not appeal to our taste, but I remember meeting Ron's glance across the table, and in his eyes he echoed my thoughts: "If this stuff does what they say it does, this is revolutionary." The immediate result of that meeting was a think tank session held at Haystack school the following spring.

PMC is the brainchild of Japanese metallurgist Dr. A. Morikawa, who at the time was manager of a state-of-the-art refining operation that specialized in precious metals. He challenged his team of scientists to radically change the character of the metals they used every day—to convert something rigid and technically demanding into something as easy to handle as children's modeling clay. The recipe was simple, but it took several years to achieve consistent and reliable results. After mastering the technology with gold, they were able to produce a silver product, which was patented in 1994. Since then, Mitsubishi Materials has developed two additional versions of silver (called PMC+ and PMC3), a 22k gold coating material (Aura 22), and a surprisingly tough 22k yellow gold alloy that has just been released.

The situation with PMC is different from die forming and

reactive metals because the material is made by a single manufacturer and distributed (originally) by a single company, Rio Grande. From the start, the maker and distributor have promoted classes to train teachers, and both companies support the PMC Guild, an educational organization formed in 1999. The Guild, which currently boasts about 3000 members, publishes a quarterly magazine, hosts a popular Web site, sponsors bi-annual conferences, and maintains an Internet service that allows teachers to advertise their classes for free.

One of the most exciting aspects of PMC, and something that is echoed in other innovative techniques, is the way it merges diverse backgrounds. In this case, people with experience in ceramics, polymer clay, modelmaking, and sculpture find themselves nicely positioned to use PMC. These artists bring with them new ways of thinking about materials and resources from their other lives. This creative cross-pollination stimulates ideas, which stimulate further ideas, which draw other artists... you get the picture.

In every case I researched, an important part of bringing a new technique into the studio was a personality that bridged this gap, a scientist with an artistic streak or an artist with some scientific background.

Observations

Work done in the infancy of a new technique is usually, well, mediocre. Books published in the 1960s show examples of a new-at-the-time process called investment casting. Pieces included in national exhibitions back then might not earn a passing grade in a college class today. This is not a criticism of our forerunners, but a testament to the rapid maturity of design as a process becomes integrated into the field. Those who get hung up on the early work in a new technique or material risk closing their minds to opportunities that are not yet apparent.

In my work with PMC I have become aware of, not one, but two cultural divides. Metal clay was developed in a high-tech lab by Japanese scientists. Since I don't speak Japanese, it was predictable that we would experience communication problems. What I didn't foresee was the cultural block that can arise between artists and scientists. The scientists' training, their methods, their goals, and even their mindset was radically different than what I saw in studio artists. In every case I researched, an important part of bringing a new technique into the studio was a personality that bridged this gap, a scientist with an artistic streak or an artist with some scientific background. In the case of PMC, each party was able to bring special strengths to the problems we faced. At the Haystack retreat in 1995, I remember overhearing a technician telling someone in the group that a particular technique wouldn't work. Of course most of us would recognize that this was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Sure enough, the artist tried it, and to the amazement of the scientists, it worked.

Noted scientist and writer Cyril Stanley Smith places the matter of innovation in an interesting light in his book of essays, *A Search for Structure* (MIT Press, 1981). We generally think that technical information and new materials migrate from the business or scientific world into the arts. In the shallowest version of this, artists get the scraps that fall to the cutting room floor and turn them into interesting baubles. Smith takes us back to a much earlier time when humankind made the shift from stone tools to spear points made of metal. He observes that for the dominant industry (stone chippers), improvement in technology meant better stones. It took a radical departure, probably by someone outside the existing establishment, to recover a blob of metal that was accidentally refined in a fire. Only after that person had investigated the properties of this new substance and discovered a few tricks for working with it was the material of interest to the established order.

Every new process has its skeptics. There is the famous miscalculation when managers at IBM couldn't imagine that people would actually want a personal computer at home. In fact it is difficult to think of any important device, process, or medical treatment that received immediate endorsement. There are jewelers who see die forming, metal clay, reactive metals, and other new techniques as fads that will soon pass. I think they are wrong. Will PMC ever replace lost wax casting, or will the hydraulic press make hammers obsolete? Of course not, but they enlarge the possibilities of what we do and how we do it. And how can that be a bad thing?

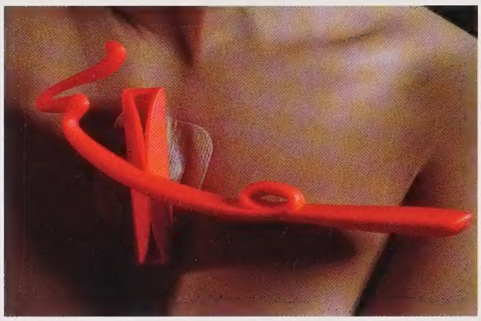
Tim McCreight is a metalsmith, designer, teacher, and author who works in Portland, Maine.

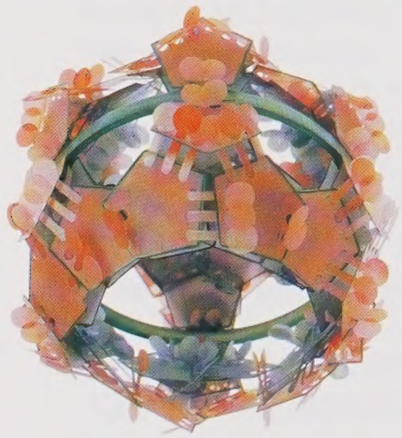
REVIEWS

"ALTERNATIVES: MATERIALS/MEANS"

BANNISTER GALLERY
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE
APRIL 7-29, 2005

by KATHERINE INGRAHAM





This is the second show curated by Sondra Sherman for the Bannister Gallery (after *Evocative Objects* in 2004) and, like the first, this one is visually arresting and thought provoking, with strong printed material supporting the exhibition.

The show comprised 14 artists who use various alternative approaches to jewelry-making, either through choice of material or process. The exhibition presented a broad spectrum of work, including established artists and relative newcomers, work that is blatantly non-traditional and work that initially appears more conventional but contains hints of revolution. The seduction of a material's inherent qualities can often strike a viewer viscerally at first and then, like a sugar rush, the energy and interest fades. It is satisfying to see that most of the artists here seem to be working with materials and processes for which they have a real affinity.

Svenja John uses alternative materials in a somewhat traditional way. She enlists hand-painted and formed plastic polycarbonate components to create jewel-toned geometric forms that take on an expansive floral quality. Her stick and ball connections would be familiar to any student of beginning jewelry but, through variation of form, ingenious construction, and sheer quantity, she has pushed the material beyond the easily reproducible realm of fashion (an area where plastics have actually been used in highly innovative ways). Her vitae states that the past 10 years have been a dedicated exploration of the polycarbonate—a longevity not normally associated with alternative materials. Here, the material is not secondary to form or concept. Rather, the specific studio practice that results from her exploration of material defines the work.

Working in an entirely different way, Rebecca Strzelec's brooches from the "Shorthand Series" occupy another territory—combining alternative material, process and context. The vivid red forms are three-dimensional versions of two-dimensional shorthand characters, generated with the assistance of CAD and formed through the use of rapid prototyping. Strzelec also considers alternative body context by affixing the forms to bandages, which are to be worn directly on the skin. This is a lot to tackle, and the pieces aren't fully resolved. However, there's something to be admired in the strength of the gesture and her willingness to expand the visual language with this relatively new process. Here the material serves purely as the vehicle for translating form. The process is really the crucible of creation, even as it occurs on the microchip level, invisible to the human hand that guides it.

Yet another approach is to use a variety of materials with a fluency that incorporates each equally in an intuitive, almost organic way—a kind of material egalitarianism that subverts the normal hierarchy and can create interesting juxtapositions. In this vein, Doris Betz presents fimo as fimo, with all its inherent squishability, not fimo masquerading as something more refined. The material itself doesn't seem central to her exploration as an artist but she ennobles it by emphasizing its most basic, fundamental quality. In contrast to John and Strzelec, material and process are less important than the finesse to flexibly create compositions from disparate elements.

Although this type of work can appear avant-garde to viewers, there is a long history of using alternative materials within the metal arts. And jewelers have always incorporated technical advancements from manufacturing into their studio practice (anodizing and electroforming being relatively new additions to the field). If there is such a precedent, why is this important now? In fact, why launch an exhibit that showcases alternative materials and processes when many in the field are interested in less categorization and more fluidity between art, craft, and design? Conceptually, there are many ways to push the envelope of jewelry and the traditional metal arts and this is worth pursuing on its own merits. And visually this powerful show has the potential to inspire both new practitioners and those in a rut.

Katherine Ingraham is a writer and metalsmith living in Brookline, Massachusetts.

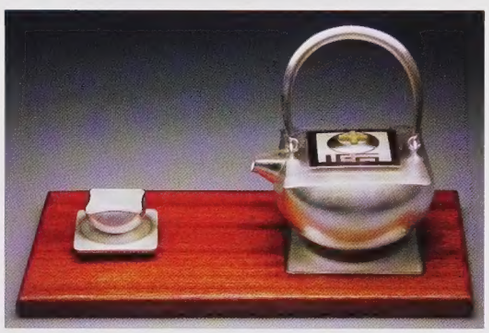
clockwise from top left

Doris Betz
Brooch, 2004
iron steel plate, fimo
diameter 4 1/8"

Mary Pearse
Residue, 2004
paper, sterling silver and synthetic aquamarine
3 3/8 x 3 5/8 x 5/16"

Rebecca Strzelec
Solid Brooch from the "Shorthand Series," 2004
fused deposition modeled, ABS plastic, medical adhesive
4 1/4" x 7 1/2" x 3"

Svenja John
Vize (bracelet), 2004
surface-treated Polycarbonate, colored and crafted by hand



"IN SERVICE"
MACDONALD STEWART ART CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
ONTARIO, CANADA
JANUARY 29-APRIL 17, 2005

by ANNE MCPHERSON

"In Service" brings together nine of Canada's finest silversmiths to present their variations on a humble theme, hammered and beaten to exquisite heights. The theme, it turns out, is neither as modest nor as simple as the title might suggest.

Two sets of contrasting ideas bind the exhibition together. There is the play between the lowly, or at least self-negating, idea of service to others—whether indentured, paid or freely given—and the grandiose one, as in the silver service of our grandmothers, prominently displayed on the credenza, or proudly brought in on the doily-covered tray to add glisten and style to an afternoon tea party. But in this exhibition what might have been a paradox isn't one, because none of these striking works are in themselves either pitifully undeserving or ostentatiously grand.

Starting from a dictionary definition of the word "service," the artists explore with wit, grace and profundity particular meanings as they apply to their own practice and life interests. For instance, Beth Alber's paired almost-vessels of satin-finished silver, such as *Both Sides Now*, are creased and tipped to avoid wholly domestic connotations. At the same time they resemble serving hands, or cherishing hands. Both labor and affection are ennobled by the marbling effect of the inner surfaces of gold leaf, pastel, and pencil. There is no sense of dutiful service in Lois Etherington Betteridge's *A Rose is...a Rose is...a Rose*, but rather the notion of contributing to others' welfare through beauty. One finds sheer pleasure in the splendor of surface and form in these delicately fluttering silver vessels. Their carved dark soapstone mounts have been left unpolished in thoughtful contrast to the seemingly fragile shapes they support.

Ken Vickerson plays on the idea of making peace not war. In two works from his "Ploughshare Series," the trowel and dibber are made from recycled guns, the grips from handsomely carved and polished pear wood, and each implement mounted on Japanese paper and set in a pear wood display box with glass front. So guns are turned into ploughshares, following a biblical injunction. Jackie Anderson's humorous take on waiting at table appears in the form of three silver tiaras, turning any idea of the grumpy or obsequious servant upside down. In *"Flatware" Tiara* flattened forks, knives, and spoons form the silhouette of an admiral's hat, a salute to the senior service, of which Anderson's father was a member.

Taking the idea of a religious ritual as their starting point, two artists each created a piece for a communion service, with contemporary imagery. Beth Biggs's silver ciborium *I am a Lily*, intended for a woman priest, is forceful in shape, its curved lines contrasting to the overall geometric water lily design (on the cover it more closely resembles a lotus than a lily). The work, which expresses "the feminine involvement with the process of life," recalls the accepted artistic use of the lily as the symbol of the Virgin Mary, and of chastity. Different lily, different times. Mary Anne Barkhouse's delicate patinated copper chalice, *Keeper of the Water*, carries its symbolism gracefully—organically, one could say—from a cup with curving rim which seems to flow into a twisting stem that is both water- and tree-like, down to the base, which is surrounded by pairs of industrious beavers. A community in service to themselves and to others, preserving our habitat.

Domestic ritual has a glowing place in this exhibition, as three artists focus on the old-fashioned idea of a silver service, with entirely new emphases. Brigitte Clavette's *Women's Work* is a collection of silver ladles and serving pieces, gracefully wrought, hopelessly non-pragmatic. This is the artist's celebration of women at home, in their ability to turn an ordinary occasion into a formal luxurious event. The final step is to bring women's work into the salon of the collector where these pieces belong. With two of Anne Barros's works, the usual meaning of the silver service is wittily diverted. One of them, *Snail's Pace*, is a silver-plated plinth across which two silver snails tow slim acrylic and silver vessels holding spices. A matching set, *Par Terre*, has containers for salt and peppercorns with a circular dish in the center—possibly a mortar for pepper.

Kye-Yeon Son's *Service for Memory* presents a wine pot and cup for a ceremony in memory of past experiences—the references are not specific, but one knows how precious these must be simply by contemplating the exquisite form of the vessels. The grace is in the shaping of the satin-finished surfaces, moving from the flat, slightly indented square of the top, belling out from the "shoulder," and narrowing to form a perfect circle at the base. In this work, memory and harmony dwell together.

Anne McPherson is a writer and curator living in St. Catherines, Ontario.

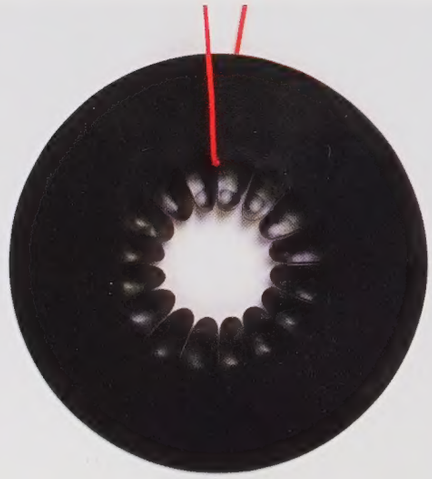
clockwise from top left
Beth Alber
Both Sides Now, A Conversation, 2003
sterling silver, 24k gold leaf, pastels, pencil
4 3/4 x 2 3/8 x 2"

Mary Anne Barkhouse
Keeper of the Water, 2002
patinated copper
4 x 10 5/8"
Photo: Keith Betteridge

Kye-Yeon Son
Service for Memory, 2002
sterling silver, marble, wood
tray 11 3/4 x 6 1/8 x 6 3/4"
cup 2 x 2 x 1 1/8"
wine pot 4 3/4 x 4 3/8 x 5 7/8"

Lois Etherington Betteridge
A Rose is...a Rose is...a Rose (G. Stein), 2004
sterling silver, soapstone
5 1/8 x 4 3/8 x 3 1/8"
Photo: Keith Betteridge

REVIEWS



"EDINBURGH COMES TO CLERKENWELL"

LESLEY CRAZE GALLERY
LONDON
APRIL 22–MAY 21, 2005

by DEIRDRE O'DAY

Over the past 20 years, the city of Edinburgh has become a place to watch for emerging talent in contemporary jewelry. This is the result of several factors: the National Galleries of Scotland's collections and exhibitions policy, commercial support in the city, and the superb opportunities for jewelry studies offered by the Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) under the stewardship of professor Dorothy Hogg and her fellow-jeweler/teacher Susan Cross. This exhibition is the second collaboration between Lesley Craze Gallery and ECA The first, in 1995, led to shows at galleries in the United States, and is a measure of Craze's committed belief in the college's importance on the international jewelry scene. Dorothy Hogg curated this exhibition in which she and Susan Cross continue their practice of showing with their students, a manifestation of their trusting and participatory relationship with them, and the show is characterized by a willingness to experiment individually. As Elizabeth Goring of the National Museum of Scotland writes, Hogg "... has the ability to draw out and nurture the best from within the student, without imposing from outside."

The exhibition is notable for its striking images and forms and innovative technical processes. The profound impact of Japanese art on the consciousness of jewelers and silversmiths internationally in recent years informs much of the work. This current cultural transmission recalls the latter half of the nineteenth century, when *japonisme* emerged with the Aesthetic Movement in Britain, and in Art Nouveau in France and Belgium. During that period, *japonisme* came about through direct exposure to Japanese art and artifacts, as a result of their release for the first time onto the international market in the 1860s. The opportunities did not then exist for the craftsman to craftsman contact possible today, when Japanese artists are studying and working with Western ones. As a result, one can discern a deeper, more spiritual or philosophical Japanese influence, as well as the formal and technical ones. Two Japanese jewelers are featured in the show. Yoshiko Nishina contributes a series of "Voids." One, a circular pendant in oxidized steel suspended on a fine red cord, has at its center a vacant space fringed with black acrylic. This example of Nishina's concept of the "invisible presence" embodies the traditional simplicity and quiet calm that we associate with the Japanese master Yasuki Hiramatsu. Artist Naoko Yoshizawa uses Japanese techniques of *origami* folding paper to create kite-like brooches, subtly-colored with Japanese watercolors and inks. Student artist Anna Gordon has been investigating Japanese silks, and adopts the forms of *Ikebana* flower arranging in a brooch in the form of a leafless "twig" of oxidized silver, decorated with a single enameled gold flower and small peridot "buds." *Ikebana* imagery recurs in Susan Kerr's oxidized silver brooch of cherry blossoms silhouetted against gray leather. The theme of nature continues in the soft sprouting organic forms of a brooch by Ann Little. She layers and deepens the surfaces of her pieces with different colored enamels, abrading each one to achieve the effect of ceramic or stone. Grace Kirvan's enameled silver brooch—like a clutch of fresh green bamboo shoots—evokes flotsam washed up by the sea, while Beth Legg creates metaphors for recovered memory, drawing sheets of silver tightly over underlying forms of twigs, pods and leaves. The chosen materials of Susan Cross, Jenny Deans, and Andrew Lamb are gold and silver threads woven and blended. Cross uses this technique ingeniously to explore the crossover between jewelry and textiles, and Dean's elegant, understated pieces are abstractions of architectural and sculptural configurations. Lamb employs the Central Asian *Ikat* technique, used for binding colored silks and cottons, and reflects on illusions in nature, such as camouflage. He weaves his threads into symmetrical patterns, achieving a fluid, indefinable shimmer of silver on the gold of a bracelet. Amidst this show's inventiveness, his work refers us back to pure classicism.

Deirdre O'Day, a former curator of jewelry at the Victoria & Albert museum, is a writer on jewelry and the arts.

clockwise from top left
Yoshiko Nishina
The Void 1, 2005
oxidized steel
diameter 4 3/4"
Photo: Yoshiko Nishina

Ann Little
Brooch, 2005
silver and enamel
2 x 1 1/2"

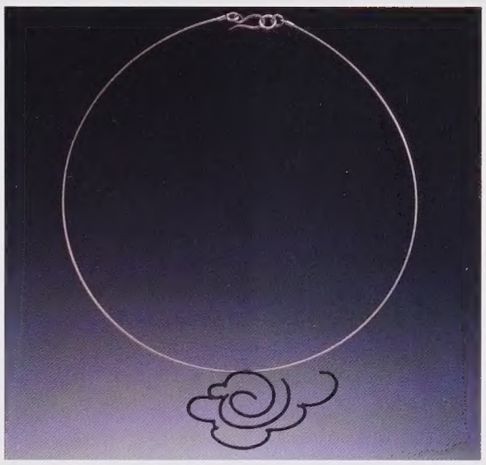
Andrew Lamb
Bracelet, 2004
18k yellow gold and silver
3 3/8 x 3 3/8"
Photo: Keith Leighton

Susan Cross
Crinkle Series Brooch, 2005
oxidized silver and gold
diameter 3"

"HANGING IN BALANCE: 42 CONTEMPORARY NECKLACES"

RUSSELL HILL ROGERS GALLERIES,
SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF ART AND CRAFT,
SAN ANTONIO
JUNE 16–AUGUST 14, 2005

by DIANE FALKENHAGEN



It was fitting that "Hanging in Balance: 42 Contemporary Necklaces" was a featured exhibit of San Antonio's annual Contemporary Art Month. Given the avant-garde nature of the work and its sophisticated setting, it seemed appropriate to contemplate these progressive jewelry designs within the context of the broader contemporary art scene.

The exhibition of current work by 14 international jewelry artists was curated by Rachelle Thiewes and Kate Bonansinga and originated as simultaneous installations at two fine art venues in El Paso, Texas. The intent was to present unique works that freely interpret the necklace format and examine the experiential nature of jewelry. Liberated from convention, the jewelry artists of "Hanging in Balance" go beyond these curatorial requisites to test a myriad of aesthetic and intellectual ideas.

Jan Baum's work challenges the viewer least by coming closest to the traditional necklace form. Her simple but striking iconographic pendants hang on circular hoops of steel cable. The flat, graphic pieces mimic actual tattoo designs—a bird, a cloud, a scroll—and are rendered in small-gauge, blackened steel wire.

Baum's stark economy of expression is in striking contrast to Helen Ellison-Dorion's manifestation of chaos and obsession. Ellison-Dorion uses randomly interlocked rings of fine steel and silver wire in her chain mail-like forms that are accented with small enameled shapes. Through the repetitious build up of hundreds of wire rings, Ellison-Dorion creates mass and length for her double-ended, cascading forms meant to be worn over the neck, much like a scarf or boa.

All of the pieces in "Hanging in Balance" make strong visual statements off the body, yet all are technically wearable. Furthermore, the artists understand and exploit the implications of the object-wearer relationship and are well aware of a jewelry object's power to shape the physical and social experience of the wearer.

Maria Hanson and Sandra Enterline are formalists whose work exploits the physical phenomenon of equilibrium and motion. Enterline's focus on form, space, and movement is evident in her untitled neckpiece in which 16 perforated, inverted bowl forms dangle in balanced pairs from kinetic extensions of a circular neck cable. In Hanson's *Interlock #1*, a large (also perforated) ovoidal form in silver is tied to one end of a satin ribbon; it slips lariat-style through a flat, gold-leafed washer attached to the ribbon's opposite end. The wearer controls the visual and physical balance of the piece by adjusting the distance between the two forms.

In antithesis to the formalism of Enterline and Hanson is the emotionalism of Iris Bodemer. Her intentionally naïve-looking *No. 04-001* consists of beads, cast bronze twigs, and found objects (a bone, a ball of yarn) strung together and displayed in a contrived manner—draping in and out of rustic tin cans like a child's secret treasure-trove. The work is rife with nostalgia and sentimentality, which was surprising in the sophisticated context of this show.

In further contrast to Bodemer's work is that of Anika Smulovitz, a conceptualist whose clever silver *Lip Liners* some may recall. Here, in her "White Collar" series, she continues her commentary about status, gender, and sexuality with neckpieces neatly fashioned from the deconstructed collars of mens' white Oxford shirts.

In the exhibition's namesake piece, *Hanging in Balance*, Nora Fok combines fine monofilament with clear acrylic balls, knotting and tying them into a covering that drapes over the shoulders and relies on the wearer's body to give it sculptural form. Off the body, the piece is limp, lifeless, yet is still an interesting object.

Cynthia Cousens's sixty-three-inch-tall, net-like grid is made from delicate white linen thread and tissue paper discs; it is a loosely woven pattern of lines and dots and is displayed hanging flat on the wall. A viewer unaware of the exhibition's theme may not recognize this piece as wearable. Not even its title, *White on White*, hints at its relationship to jewelry.

The material array of "Hanging in Balance" evokes a mental inventory of sensual extremes and other contrarieties: rough/smooth, warm/cool, strong/fragile, visceral/industrial, opaque/transparent, etc. While a material's aesthetic, physical, or associative powers alone can give meaning to an object, most of the artists in "Hanging in Balance" choose materials based on their ability to service the creative idea.

The jewelry objects in this show raise questions about the limits of classification, the implications of materiality, the value of skill, and the notion of wearability. These 42 pieces do not subscribe to conventional jewelry models based on notions of value, preciousness, or symbolism. That is not to say that these or other traditional craft values don't exist in the work, but clearly, the real worth of this work lies in its expressiveness.

Diane Falkenhagen is a metal artist who works and resides in Galveston Island, Texas.

clockwise from top left
Iris Bodemer
No. 04-001, 2004
bronze, rose quartz, coral, citrine, pyrite, bone
4 1/2 x 10 x 2 1/2"

Anika Smulovitz
White Collar # 4, 2003
men's white shirt collars
13 x 12 x 12"

Jan Baum
Wave/Cloud (Tattoo #3), 2004
steel, silver
center element 1 1/4 x 2 1/4"

Nora Fok
Hanging in Balance, 2004
nylon, acrylic balls
diameter 20"

REVIEWS

"TIMOTHY HORN: DIFFICULT TO SWALLOW"

HOSFELT GALLERY
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
MARCH 12–APRIL 16, 2005

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

This exhibition is well named. On my first visit to the gallery, I wasn't sure I could swallow Horn, or his message, let alone the 10 outsize works in this show. My initial reactions were, in fact, shock and outrage.

Australian Timothy Horn delights in exposing some of our ideas of what constitutes precious. One of the historical pieces he chose as a target was a favorite of mine—the Canning jewel, a magnificent Italian or South German pendant, made around 1560, in gold, enamel, pearl, and ivory and set with diamonds and rubies. It shows a feisty, athletic merman, with a torso created from a huge baroque pearl, flourishing a jeweled shield and scimitar, now a pièce de résistance of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Horn model is an enormous caricature, 54 inches tall, in nickel-plated bronze, weighing over 100 pounds. A crowned merman, holding a sun-topped scepter, is wreathed in pale yellow stars and has an hourglass tucked under his left arm. His craggy body is breaking out in pus-colored jewels. To make matters worse, the artist christened him *Spunk (boy germs)*.

It took careful study, and numerous visits, for my sense of humor to reassert itself so that I could appreciate Horn's intentions. He has created 10 large wall sculptures in different media, many of which were based on the jewelry design books circulated in Europe since the sixteenth century. With the exception of *Spunk*, they all reflect the taste and styles of rococo courtly jewelry. It was a time when costly pieces were used as diplomatic gifts between heads of state, courtiers and courtesans, currency in royal treasuries, badges of office, or flashy adornments on the bodies or clothing of the rich and famous. A good deal of it was dull or gaudy, which Horn emphasizes by exaggerating its size.

Half of Horn's pieces are blowups of girandoles, pendants, or earrings with dangling jeweled or pearl drops. A couple are badges of office or achievement, jeweled in ruby- or sapphire-colored glass. All are nickel-plated bronze, fabricated by this versatile artist, who also cast or blew the glass ornaments, shaping some of the lead crystals to look like facets, and tinting the bloated drops to resemble fine South Sea or Tahitian pearls. Most of the faceted glass is also foiled (as the eighteenth-century originals might have been), to increase the light reflection and achieve changes in color.

In a side room are two wall sculptures in cast, translucent golden brown rubber, like torched exhibits from the Amber Room or outtakes from Masterpiece Theater costumes. *Silk Purse* is a poke at eighteenth-century architectural pretentiousness, with its follies and pergolas. *Mutton Dressed as Lamb* is a costume riff, resembling an overdecorated ball gown worn by an overweight dowager.

It's certainly not unusual for artists to make fun of preciousness or dump it altogether. One has only to think of Otto Kunzli's rubber bracelets with their concealed gold ball, Susan Kingsley's flat blue outlines of Tiffany jewelry, or the numerous jewelers working in beach glass, pebbles, tin, man-made, or recycled materials. Horn's contribution, like Andy Warhol's, is to use sheer size and color to make his point, as well as being an admirably skilled and versatile craftsman. He also reflects a preoccupation with sexual issues. One piece, *Goldilocks (gentlemen prefer blondes)*, conjures a contemporary, egalitarian sneer at "rich lady" jewelry, traditionally given by wealthy males as a reward for affection, possession, or sexual favors.

Horn also creates a troubling and not always tasteful tribute to homosexuality. A closer look at *Spunk* suggests several scenarios, one of which is AIDS. This fellow could very well be on his way out, with his pus-colored jewels (lesions?) and roughened skin. *Jam Fancy (school sores)* is nastier, a heart-shaped sculpture with red lead crystals like bicycle reflectors, suggesting furtive goings-on in the boys' bathroom and a need to visit a dermatologist. Are both these pieces laments, celebrations, badges of honor in the gay community or merely a jolly Aussie spoof? The whole question is of course open to debate, which is part of this exhibition's maddening charm.

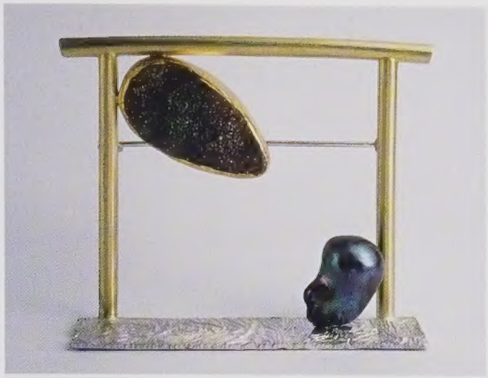
Melbourne-born artist Horn has already made a considerable reputation "Down Under," and is now hitting the U.S., earning an MFA from Massachusetts College of Art in 2004, and setting up a studio in Cape Cod. The Hosfelt Gallery exhibition was his first solo show here—it certainly won't be his last. If you can catch him, be prepared to be infuriated and entertained.

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

clockwise from top left
Goldilocks (gentlemen prefer blondes), wall sculpture, 2001
lead crystal, nickel-plated bronze, Easter egg foil
26 x 21 1/2 x 2 3/4"

Spunk (boy germs), wall sculpture, 2002
lead crystal, nickel-plated bronze, Easter egg foil, mirrored blown glass
54 1/4 x 19 3/4 x 7 3/4"

Jam Fancy (school sores), wall sculpture, 2001
cast lead crystal, nickel-plated bronze, Easter egg foil
18 1/2 x 18 1/2 x 2"



"ZEITGEIST"
ZILBERSCHMUCK: ART JEWELLERY
TORONTO
MARCH 27-MAY 7, 2005

by JOHN CARNES AND KEN VICKERSON

Zeitgeist is literally translated from German as "time ghost;" the definition is "the spirit of the time; the taste and outlook characteristic of a period or generation." This is the title and theme of a juried exhibition at Toronto's newest jewelry gallery, Zilberschmuck. This broad theme was interpreted by a geographically diverse group of Canadian jewelers and metalsmiths. Viewing the responses both written and wrought, brings to mind the apocryphal Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times."

Andrée Wejsmann's entries, which garnered her "Best of Show" honors, speak about a personal sense of time. Her surreal pocket chairs, one of which sports a tiny mohair sweater, are metaphors for time's relativity. The bail bars give the viewer a visual clue that references pocket watches; the titles remain cryptic and personal, lending the works an air of mystery. Her eloquent statement describes the works as symbolic of "the trace of time spent thinking rather than doing" and "the delicate futility of sitting and marking time." Their meticulous wonkiness suggests an accidental materialization from a dimension where they make complete sense—time ghosts indeed.

The subtle surface and exquisite finish on Erin Anderson's ring, titled *Semi-Precious Roads*, belie a lamentable environmental situation in Erin's native Nova Scotia. The ring, executed in 14k gold and sterling, is inlayed with powdered enamel, crushed orange farolite, and epoxy. Anderson tells the story of the basalt cliffs near Digby that are being blasted to produce material for use as road pavement. These cliffs provide habitat for numerous species of birds and contain semi-precious stones such as the rare orange farolite, which she crushed to "pave" her ring. It is hard to mistake the meaning of the broken gold line that runs down the center of her ring and hard to look at the piece without thinking about the environmental disaster it represents.

Without compromising its integrity as an engaging stand-alone object, Brenda Roy's *Wall Brooch #1* addressed the theme of the show quite well. Roy's accompanying essay spoke of "walls," both literal and metaphorical. Paranoia and xenophobia push countries into reflexive nationalism, and individuals into gated communities. Other barriers (the Berlin wall, prohibition of gay marriage) are simultaneously dismantled. Roy's piece depicts this contradiction elegantly: a rectangular silver frame inlayed with concrete and jasper (the "wall"), with a central "broken out" area of negative space and exposed silver "rebar." Depicting a monolithic structure and its inevitable collapse, this piece is a snapshot of the human social condition, a coded "yin-yang" symbol.

Sarabeth Carnat also writes of contradiction, but in her brooch, titled *Awe and Wonder* (to my mind, an answer to "shock and awe") she chooses to express one side of the coin: a humbling appreciation for the beauty of the natural world. At the bottom right of the rectangular piece sits a pearl shaped like a human head, on a sheet of reticulated silver. It "looks" up and left toward a mysteriously amorphous piece of rainbow hematite, supported by an 18k gold frame. By placing the "observer" below the "observed," Carnat wished to evoke a sense of humility. The amount of negative space between the two gems accomplishes this, implying not a sense of oppressive subservience, but a feeling of weightless serenity.

The *Dupont Bracelet* by Anna "Lindsay" MacDonald alludes to a specific street in Toronto. Pierced from a single sheet of sterling and formed into a cuff with intersecting ends, its motif reflects a textile sensibility. Upon closer inspection familiar patterns emerge until a map of the city becomes clear. MacDonald's work plays with scale relationships and the juxtaposition of the actual and the virtual. Perhaps living for the first time in a large urban center has necessitated the development of jewelry as navigational aid.

Andrea Wenckebach's *Cellular Decay Bracelet*, made of sterling silver and cell phone parts was engagingly tactile, due to the rubber buttons of the very technology she was critiquing. This playful piece asks the question: in our obsession to stay "connected," what are we "connected" to?

With her *Caracura* ring, Janet Miller expresses her anxiety over genetic engineering and the biotech industry. Two innocuous items from the natural world (a pistachio shell and a section of twig) cast together in silver become a sinister, otherworldly (or, all too this-worldly) open-mouthed mutant animal form.

Though the jury seems to have picked one or two of the pieces for their novelty alone, the show was of consistent quality and thoughtfulness in responding to the theme. And although the theme of the show opened the door for political proselytizing, the general response was mature and observational. None of the participants tried to hide work of dubious quality behind an eloquent artist's statement, and any judgments in the essays were directed at "us" and "we," not some conveniently disowned "they." If these kinds of sober reflections are even a small part of the spirit of the times, the curse "may you live in interesting times" may well yet turn into a blessing.

John Carnes is a metalsmith living and working in Toronto.

Ken Vickerson is an associate professor at the Ontario College of Art & Design with a goldsmithing practice in Toronto.

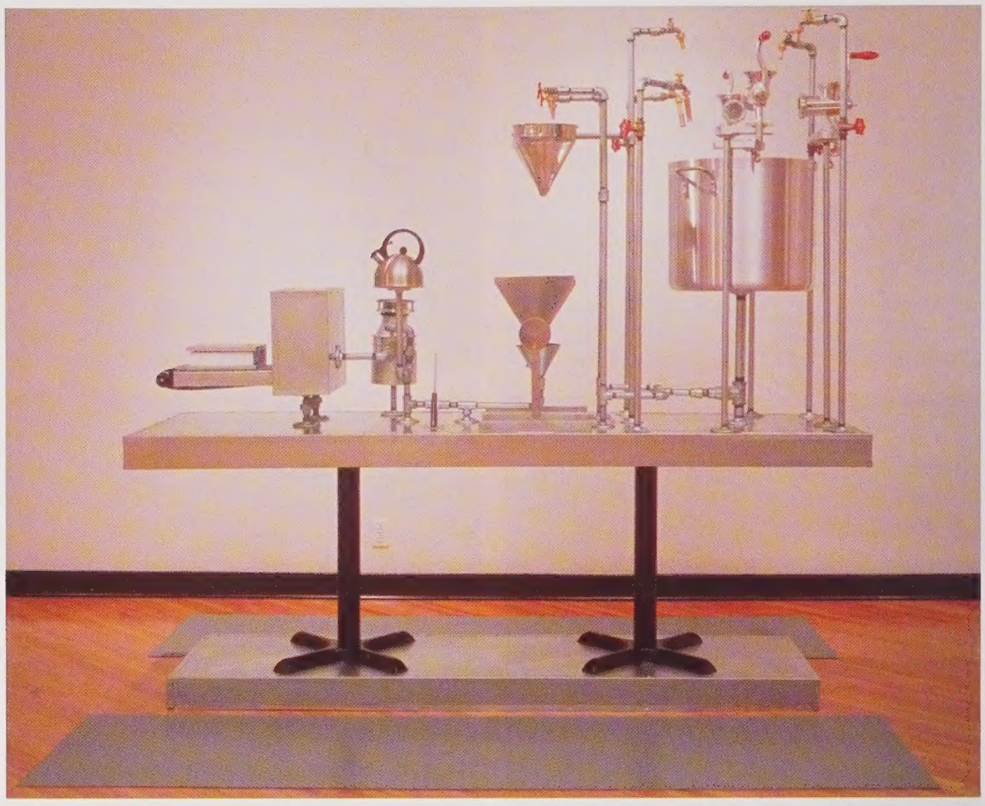
clockwise from top left
Sarabeth Carnat
Awe and Wonder, 2005
18k and 24k gold, 800 silver, rainbow hematite, pearl
1 3/4 x 2 1/4 x 1/2"

Andrée Wejsmann
You Can't Catch a Cold Like That (pocket chairs), 2004
sterling silver, hand knit mohair sweater
height 3 3/8"

Erin Andersen
Semi-Precious Roads, 2005
14k gold, sterling silver, epoxy, enamel powder, crushed orange farolite
diameter 3/4"

Brenda Roy
Wall Brooch #1 (pendant), 2005
silver, concrete, jasper, agate
1 5/8 x 1 3/8"

REVIEWS



"MICHAEL AURBACH: *THE CRITICAL THEORIST*"
LAMAR DODD ART CENTER
LAGRANGE COLLEGE
LAGRANGE, GEORGIA
MARCH 6-APRIL 14, 2005

by DOROTHY JOINER

Through the centuries few weapons have proved more telling than laughter. In *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes poked fun at the Greek male's hunger for sex that exceeded even his bellicosity. In the American colonies, malefactors restrained in stocks were punished by the ridicule of their fellows. Voltaire in eighteenth-century France lampooned Leibnitzian optimism—"the best of all possible worlds"—with the multiplied catastrophes befalling Candide and his friends. And closer to home, the group *Capitol Steps*, with sidesplitting humor, spoofs the foibles and corruption of Washington insiders.

To this richly risible tradition, Michael Aurbach contributes his laugh- and thought-provoking contraption, *The Critical Theorist* (2003), a burlesque of fatuous contemporary scholarship. The darling of chic, "avant-garde" academics, critical theory, though elusive and hard to pin down, tends to denigrate the art object, replacing its former centrality with ideational speculations.

Aurbach's fantasy machine, à la Rube Goldberg, begins with a large metal pot, suggesting that critical theory is "cooked up." Each labeled with its particular contribution to the "stew," three meat grinders extrude their ingredients into the vessel: "Essence of Derrida" (called an "abstruse theorist" by the *New York Times*); "Extract of Foucault" (Derrida's teacher); and "Art" (soon to be eliminated, however). Five faucets with valves deliver in tandem "Fragrance," "Distillate of Deconstruction" (a fancy word for analysis), as well as FD&C coloring (the official names of commercial colors): Yellow#5, Blue#1, Red#40. Nothing organic about these. Next come strainers labeled "Fact Remover." No truth here! Condiment dispensers called "Spin Cycle" follow. Then, a meat cleaver, the "Cutting Edge," secures the critical theorist's position in the academic vanguard. In addition, a garbage disposal, the "Object Disposal," grinds up the art, as it were; a teakettle, the "Art Evaporator," further eliminates its traces. The humor turns even more caustic when the product of this learned, non-functional factory appears on the conveyor belt. A wooden book opens to reveal a vibrator nestled in potpourri. A sort of intellectual masturbation, the artist jabs, critical theory is self-referential and ultimately sterile.

Aurbach's inventiveness is not spent. Two ancillary pieces accompany *The Critical Theorist*. An exquisitely spare Plexiglas box with a gabled roof is titled *Reliquary for a Critical Theorist*. Playing on the centuries-old tradition of an elaborately decorated container fashioned for the remains of a saint, Aurbach's "reliquary" is empty, void of ornamentation. In a slyly appropriate detail, moreover, the gable roof is "unhinged." Also in transparent Plexiglas, another container exactly half the size of the first—as though sliced down the middle along the ridgepole—bears the title *Reliquary for a Second-Generation Critical Theorist*. Latter-day new clothes for the Emperor!

Some academics will smile broadly or break out in guffaws at Aurbach's "wit larded with malice," to borrow Shakespeare's words. Other literati, immersed in critical theory's jargon and obfuscation, will be more dismissive. A third group, blessedly unaware of academe's "inspeak," may not appreciate the artist's incisive allusions, wondering what all the fuss is about.

Thankfully, Aurbach does not stand alone in his castigation of academic doublespeak. In his recent book, *The Rape of Masters*, Roger Kimball cites contemporary critics who actually do what Aurbach satirizes. Nicolai Cikovsky, for example, compares the sharks circling the wrecked boat in Winslow Homer's *The Gulf Stream* to "castrating temptresses, their mouths particularly resembling the *vagina dentata*, the toothed sexual organ that so forcefully expressed the male fear of female aggression." Another inventive critic, Michael Fried, sees the scattering of grain in Gustave Courbet's *The Wheat Sifters* "as a downpour of menstrual blood—not red but warm-hued and sticky-seeming—flooding outward from the sifter's rose-draped thighs."

In making viewers laugh at such absurdities, Aurbach exposes the emptiness of critical jargon that often serves only to obfuscate our understanding of art or literature. Aurbach does not hesitate to call attention to the Emperor's imaginary clothes and, using his madly inventive ability to provoke laughter, he invites viewers to do the same.

Dorothy Joiner is the Lovick P. Corn Professor of Art History at LaGrange College, LaGrange, Georgia.

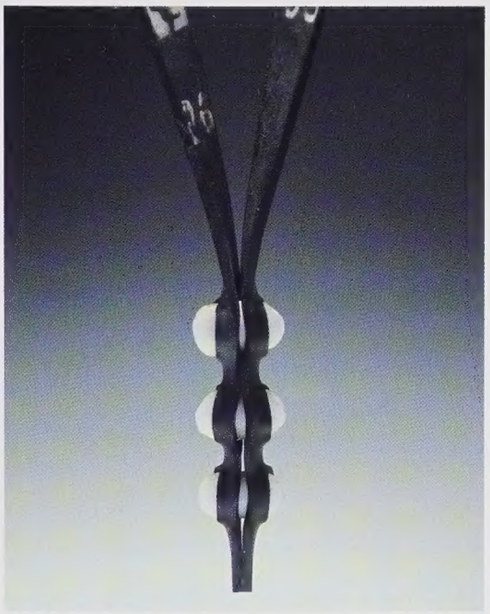
left to right
Reliquary for a Critical Theorist (1st and 2nd Generation), 2004
Plexiglas
18 x 10 x 16 1/2"

The Critical Theorist, 2002
mixed media
7 1/2 x 6 1/2 x 8'

"RESOURCES: STEEL, RUBBER, COAL AND SALT"

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
JUNE 11-AUGUST 21, 2005

by LYNN COOL



Northeast Ohio resources and their utilization were the focus for the recent exhibition, "Resources: Steel, Rubber, Coal and Salt," provoking reflections on industrialism and its effect on society. The artists' witty and thoughtful responses fulfilled the viewer's expectations of a fresh angle. Formal design elements and narrative, abstract, and minimalist themes were all evident, with intersecting approaches to style, material, and focus. Although older work, deemed worthy enough for inclusion here, did not lose its communicative value, informed viewers benefited most from the work that had never been published, and was created expressly for the show's theme.

Some artists imbued their work with historical reference. In hemispherical brooches, Lola Brooks sets rose-cut diamonds into clusters of 18k gold bezels in one, and faceted steel domes in the other, offering an interesting counterpoint of traditional vs. high-tech materials. Although Natalya Pinchuk composes industrial prose in *Highway I and II*, these neckpieces, bearing beadlike miniature autos to encircle the neck on broad arcs of steel wires, share an undeniable lineage with the Egyptian collar form. Megan Auman deceives the viewer in *She bustled 'bout the Garden 2*; although her Victorian-inspired swath of ivory rosebuds is literally stemmed in antiquity, it is created from copper, spray paint, and rubber balloons.

Other artists' work relied on a modernist vocabulary, creating forms based in contemporary style. In her whimsical double finger ring titled *Grill*, Maria Fomich's wearable miniature barbeque features a hinged grate and charcoal briquettes. She implies the resource materials, coal and steel, by fabricating only in sterling and rubber. Two artists' work demands the wearer's interaction to fully conceptualize ideas. Cristina Dias's *Carnivora* bracelets attract their potential victim, and through their beauty, conspire to grab the wearer's wrist by magnetization. Less aggressive, yet similar in vein, is Amy Reeves's bracelet *Quiver*. In this piece, a geometric structure holds steel wires with silver bud terminations that brush against the hand in a wave of organic motion, suggesting the tenuous symbiotic relationship between human and nature upon which technology rests.

Two artists offered work centered on women's issues of weight and diet. Although Caroline Gore's *Lick*, from the *beauty: poison series*, seems minimalist in style, the title informs the work with commentary. This square brooch features a salt block, set like a stone, within a plain silver bezel. An open 18k gold porthole on the reverse side offers an interesting alternate view of the powerless, adorned addict. Tara Stephenson addresses similar issues by turning the tables on the dieter's bane, salt, in *Retention #1*, featuring graceful ribbons of rubber that embrace and secure their bloating baubles, and *Retention #2*, where linear strips of rubber, emblazoned with numbers (perhaps representing pounds gained), envelop three pendular salt crystal drops.

Holloware forms were also endowed with themes of man, nature, and technology. Impressive technique and inspiration characterize Mark Herndon's *Canaveral*, a mysterious vessel-within-a-vessel laden with rivets, machined parts, and nautical instrument imagery. In Dustin Pritchard's *Untitled*, coiled vinyl tubing serves as a pedestal for its riveted steel vessel before sweeping around and through the form. Connected by brass fittings, the tubes' gold and crimson fluids appear to enliven the form, imparting a compound rhythm of factory machine and biomedical apparatus. Although Julie Luckenbill utilizes industrial rubber casting bowls in her *Investment Teapot*, handwork is subtly imparted into her work by lacing together its bowls, handle, and spout. Conversely, Stephen Yusko's holloware pieces are strong statements of craft, in which the maker's hand is the focus. A roughly honed lid, straightforward spout, and a handle of bundled steel rods play off the blocky form of *Mechanics of Solids: Teapot*. Yusko incorporates a rubber hose in *Watering Can*, but cleverly reassigns its role as handle to deny its fluid moving function. Equestrian-inspired hardware balances an elongated spout that terminates with spigot of ragged, punched steel. Erin Daily's iconographical works, *Salt Scraper #2*, featuring a salt handled, sharp-toothed cone, and *Mortar & Pestle*, where a carved salt form rests in a drilled, copper-patinated bowl, are transformations that direct the viewer to consider the dialogue of utilitarianism through contemporary metalwork.

To complement the thematic framework, the museum created unique display furniture, such as riveted steel and Plexi posts filled with bits of the material elements. Although sometimes the work and its display seemed to meld together, as in the use of rubber sheeting that supported smaller works, this active conversation was an interesting flavor to contemplate. This exhibition offered viewers a special focus on the region's character, delivering an amalgamation of thought, process, and enthusiastic endeavor, while broadening the awareness of contemporary metalsmithing as an important communicative tool.

Lynn Cool is a metalsmith and writer who lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

clockwise from top left
Tara Stephenson
Retention #2, 2005
rubber, salt
1 1/2 x 8 x 16"

Maria K. Fomich
Grill, 2005
sterling silver, rubber
2 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 2 1/2"

Dustin Pritchard
Untitled, 2004
steel, brass, bronze, vinyl, oil
8 x 6 x 6"

Megan Auman
She Bustled 'bout the Garden 2, 2004
balloons, copper, spray paint
7 x 16 x 7"

REVIEWS

"SCENTS OF PURPOSE: ARTISTS INTERPRET THE SPICE BOX"

THE CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSEUM
SAN FRANCISCO
MAY 4-SEPTEMBER 5, 2005

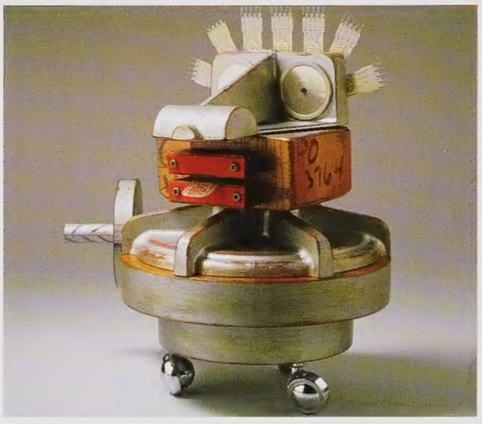
by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

One of the beauties of a good museum show is its mandate to educate. Along with displaying the work of more than 90 contemporary artists and architects, the Contemporary Jewish Museum incorporated a satisfying amount of information about the spice box, its history, its role in the traditional *havdalah* (the prayer service at the end of the Sabbath on Saturday evening), the story of the spice trade, and the role of spices and scents in many of the world's great religions.

Traditionally, the spice box is a beautifully crafted silver or wood container, full of aromatic spices such as bay leaves, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon. Passed hand to hand, it marks the moment of transition from the peace and spirituality of the Sabbath to the everyday world, and a good sniff helps keep the moment of sweetness alive during the week to come.

A display of nineteenth- and twentieth-century spice boxes suggests that the most usual motif was a miniature silver building, modeled on the often ornate architecture of Europe. Other containers were like folk toys—fish, animals, or carved gourds. The contemporary boxes were light years away in imagination, form, and materials—to be expected given the distinguished roster of architects, fine artists, ceramists, glassmakers, and metalsmiths who contributed designs.

The most modern traditional designs came from architects, such as Daniel Libeskind and Robert A.M. Stern, who either contributed minimalist mini-sculptures in wood, glass, and metal, or mini-skyscrapers. A few of the metal artists preferred the folk mode. Marilyn and Jack da Silva offered a sterling hand holding a gold-leafed silver pear titled *From Hand to Hand: A Scent of Hope*. Deborah Lozier created copper enameled seeds, flower, and pod, and Mary Ann Owen showed *Remembrance*, a copper, brass, and silver tower clustered with tiny people. Susan Wood, on the other hand, produced a masterful twenty-first-century version of the nineteenth-century spice tower in sterling, 14k gold, amethyst, and citrine.



Other artists simply let their playful imaginations rip, experimenting on the whole successfully with new materials, forms, and concepts. They showed the possibilities of having your spices served in unusual ways. Lisa Kokin created *Bessamin Mucho*, a button-covered dog with a tiny thimble around its neck. Liz Mamorsky used recycled containers to make *Spicycle*, a spice-serving robot. Mierle Ladman Ukeles and Steven N. Handel offered a chemistry set of glass containers called *I am Talking to You, 'A Scent Garden; 3 Different Deals from Nature.'* Sharon Siskin devised a *Scratch and Sniff Yiddishe Calendar* with "Print-a-Scent" stickers.

Harriete Estel Berman focused on the big picture in her table-length folding panels in recycled tin and other materials, called *And There Was Light*. One side showed the artist's view of creation, and the other, scenes from contemporary life, and her piece (which even included a spice box) was one of the talking points of the exhibition. Another talking point was a kite by the well-known Chinese artist Lee Mingwei celebrating the mythical Chinese goddess Nu Wa. A kite spice box is a stretch, even accompanied by a video of the graceful piece in flight, but it was included as part of the Museum's tribute to cross-cultural dialog.

Several other pieces expressed the spiritual meaning of the *havdalah* service, and its evocation of nostalgia, family, tradition, light and darkness. Susan Green fashioned *Havdalah for All Seasons*, a collage-decorated box topped by a tiny family at dinner. Tor Archer created a *Spice Book*, with wire lettering and a three-story metal house on the opposite page.

Family life also had its wry side. Christina Smith, known for her exploration of challenging emotional states, produced a silver tabletop sculpture titled *Staying Balanced in a State of Flux*. Nancy Selvin created *A Scented Life*—a tray of aromatic or smelly household fluids ranging from Windex and Listerine to Chanel No. 5.

Several spice boxes were flat-out funny. Elliot Ross celebrated the Jewish princess joke with his *Model for a Jewish American Beauty's Secular Spice Box*, decorated with inkjet prints and topped with an open carton of Lucky Strikes. Mildred Howard showed an assemblage called *Maid in the USA*, consisting of a silver tray, a checkered blue and white cloth, topped by three little maids in red.

As a further introduction to the *havdalah* experience, the museum included an audio section allowing visitors to tune in to the service as celebrated here, in Europe, and the Middle East. As a final touch, people were invited to pick up a bay leaf on their way home, to savor the sweetness, mystery, and fun of the whole exhibition.

An exhibition catalog is available from The Contemporary Jewish Museum.

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

clockwise from top left
Harriete Estel Berman
And There Was Light, 2004
recycled tin containers and spice tins, vintage steel dollhouses, brass, 10k gold
14 x 9 x 46" (opened)

Daniel Libeskind
L'Chaim, 2005
acrylic
13 7/8 x 3 1/4 x 4"

Liz Mamorsky
Spicycle, 2005
recycled materials on casters
14 x 14 x 10"

Lisa Kokin
Bessamin Mucho, 2005
button sculpture

SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICAN GOLDSMITHS

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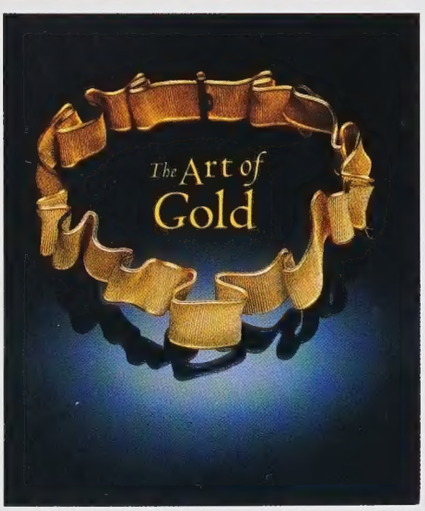
by Dana Singer

Metalsmith's juried *Exhibition in Print* in 2006

The Editorial Advisory Committee of *Metalsmith* has chosen three jurors for the 2006 *Exhibition in Print*. They are Dr. Elizabeth Goring, curator and jewelry historian, formerly responsible for the Modern Jewellery Collection at the National Museums of Scotland; Myra Mimlitsch-Gray, Professor of Art, Metals Program, State University of New York at New Paltz; and Jo Lauria, independent curator and museum consultant and former Decorative Arts Curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The Call for Entries was published in the Fall 2005 issue.

SNAG Sponsors SOFA Chicago Exhibition and Lectures

The work showcased in the *Exhibition in Print* 2005, "Flatware: Function + Fantasy," curated by Boris Bally and Rosanne Raab, was one of SOFA Chicago's Special Exhibits last October. SNAG also sponsored three lectures at SOFA Chicago. "Emerging Talent" showcased three rising stars in art jewelry, Anya Pinchuk, Sergey Jivetin, and Melanie Belinker. Dennis Nahabetian's lecture, "Merging Metal, Fiber and More," explored the processes the artist uses in making his wire vessels and jewelry. Finally, Rosanne Raab, co-curator of the *Exhibition in Print*, moderated a panel of three makers, Phillip Carrizzi, Fred Fenster, and Michel Royston, who discussed the past, present, and future of flatware, in conjunction with the Special Exhibit.



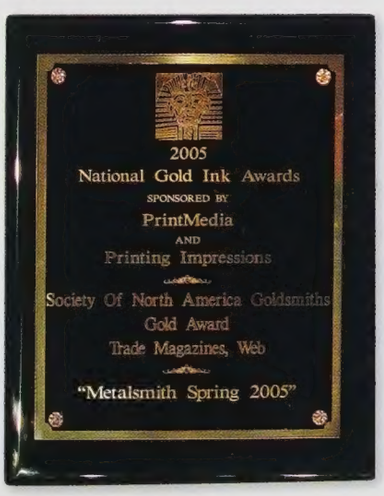
"The Art of Gold" Closes after Three-Year Tour

SNAG's highly acclaimed exhibition, "The Art of Gold," curated by Michael Monroe and managed by ExhibitsUSA, closed January 6 at its last venue, Joe & Emily Lowe Art Gallery, Syracuse, New York, after a successful three-year tour. The exhibition first opened in January 2003 at the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA. From there it traveled to nine venues, ranging from The Mint Museum of Craft + Design to the Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

Metalsmith's Printer Wins Prestigious Gold Ink Award

At an awards ceremony in Chicago last fall, St. Croix Press was honored with a 2005 Gold Ink Award—in the category of trade publications printed on the webpress—for the quality of their work on the Spring 2005 issue of *Metalsmith*. These highly competitive awards are co-sponsored by PrintMedia and Printing Impressions.

Dana Singer is the executive director of SNAG.



top to bottom
Two views of the SNAG's exhibition, "Flatware: Function + Fantasy," at SOFA Chicago.

Cover of the catalogue for "The Art of Gold" exhibition, which was sponsored by SNAG.

The Gold Ink Award, which was recently bestowed upon *Metalsmith* magazine's printer.

Erratum

We greatly regret omitting the collection and photography credit from the cover caption of our Fall 2005 issue. The necklace by Vera Siemund, titled *Shadows*, is in the collection of Donna Schneier and was photographed by Richard P. Goodbody.

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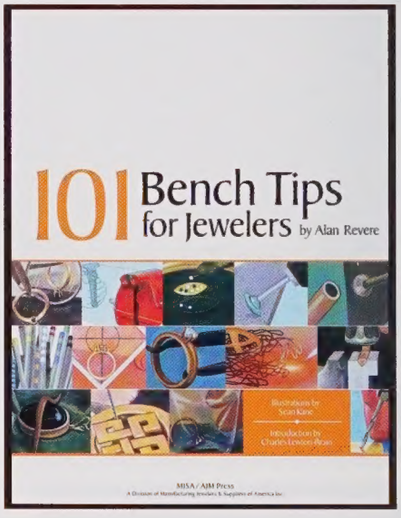

Alan Revere—acclaimed designer, author, and educator—now shares his most valuable bench tips and tricks in *101 Bench Tips for Jewelers*. Based on the monthly column in *AJM*, this book will help any jeweler speed production, improve quality, and raise profits at the bench. Filled with helpful, full-color illustrations, this publication offers tips for all aspects of bench work, from soldering to stone setting, piercing to final polish. *101 Bench Tips for Jewelers* is a resource you'll return to for many years to come.

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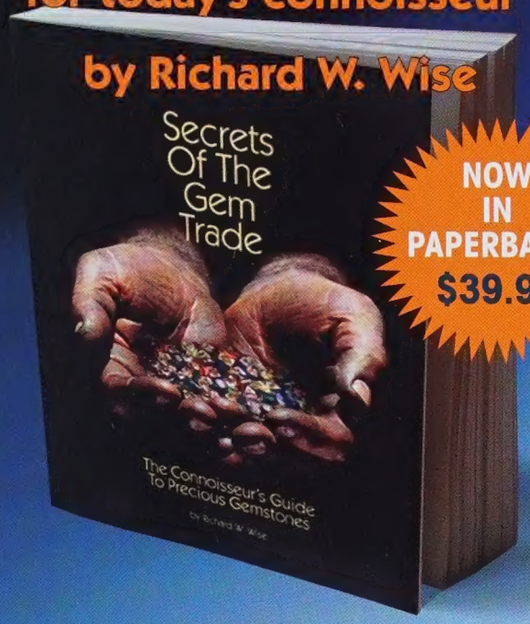

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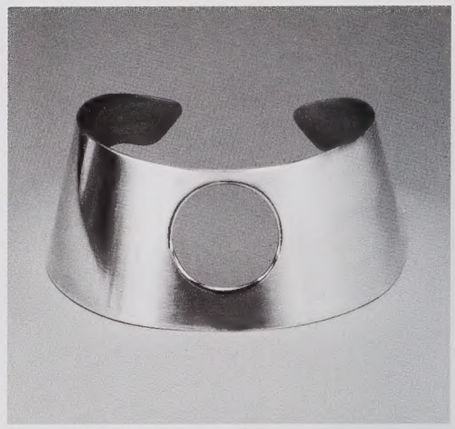

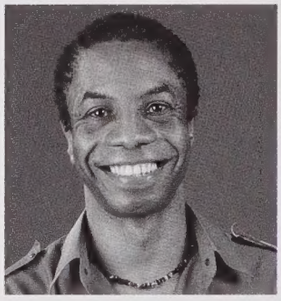

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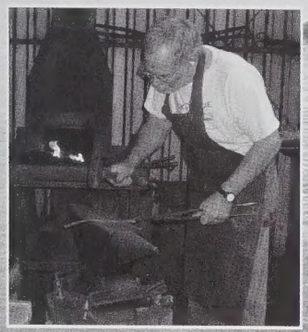

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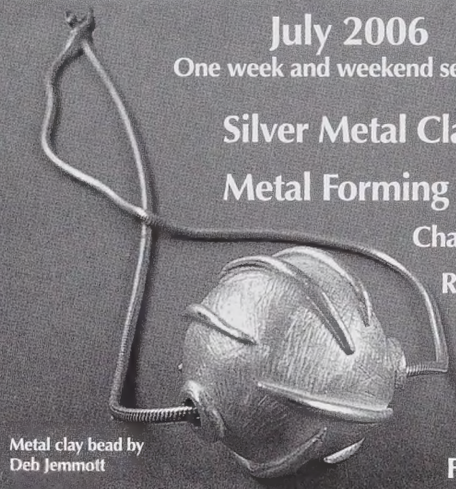

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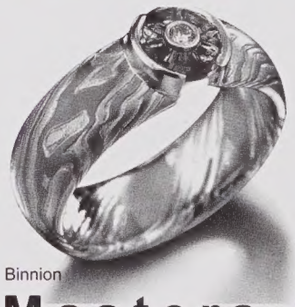

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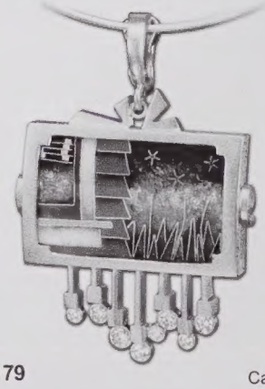

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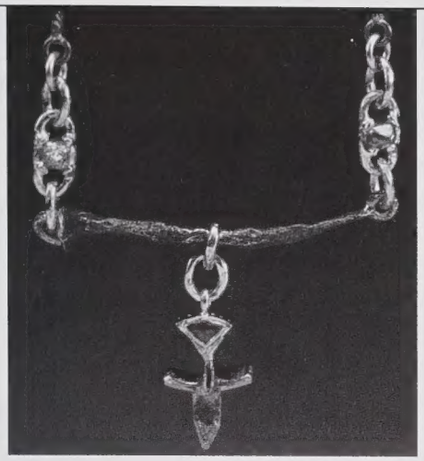

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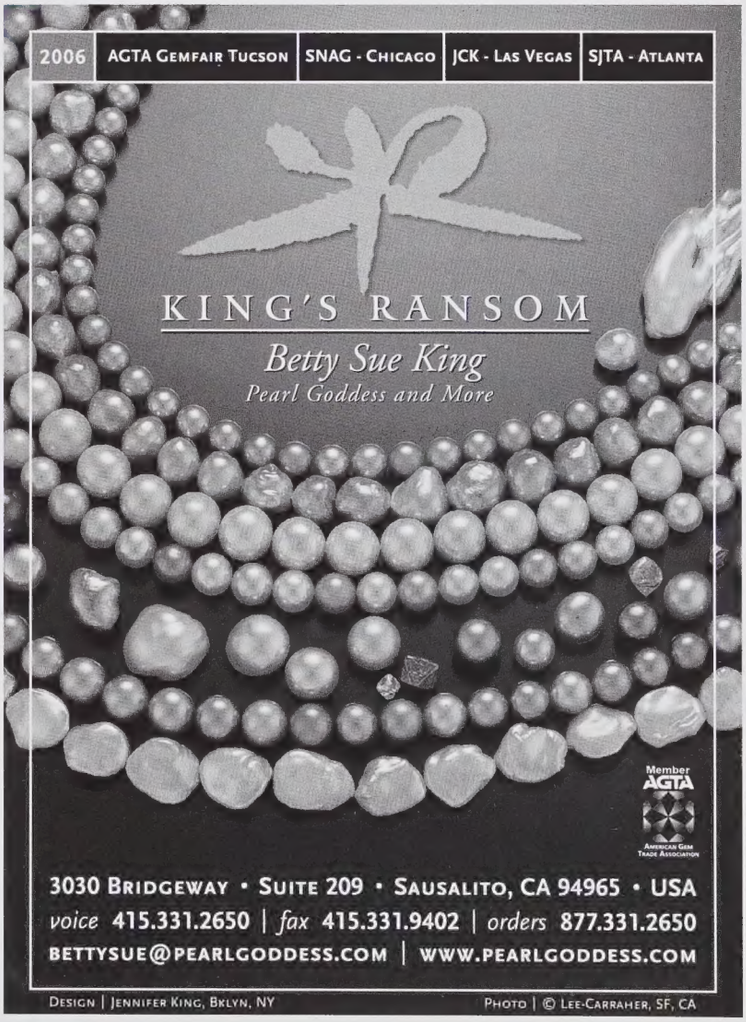

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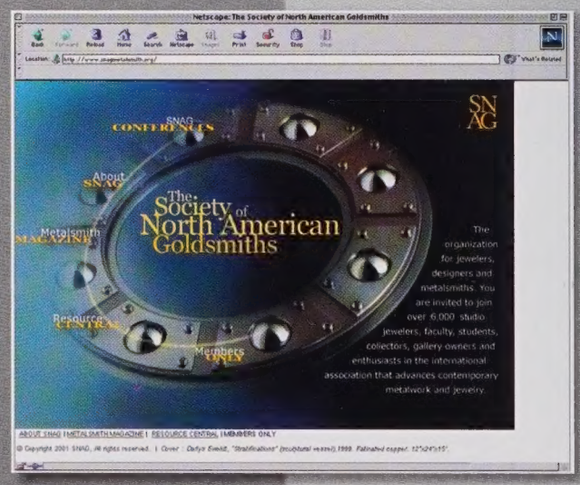
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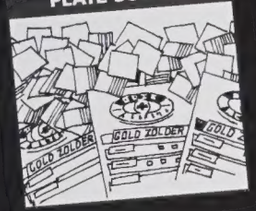

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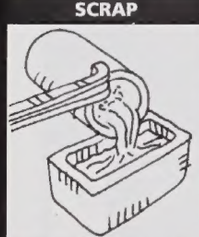

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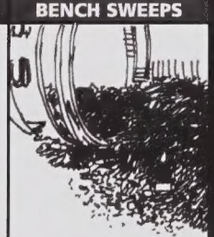

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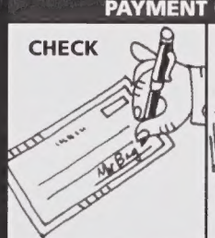

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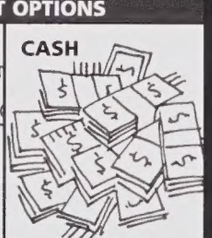

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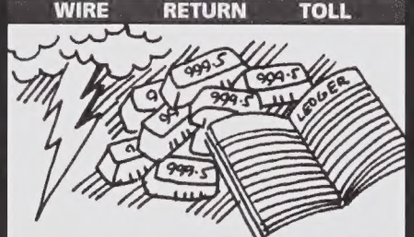

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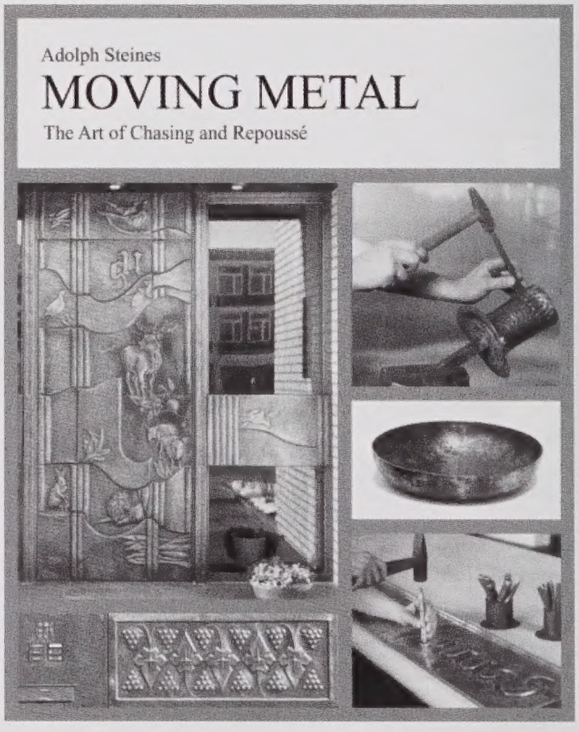

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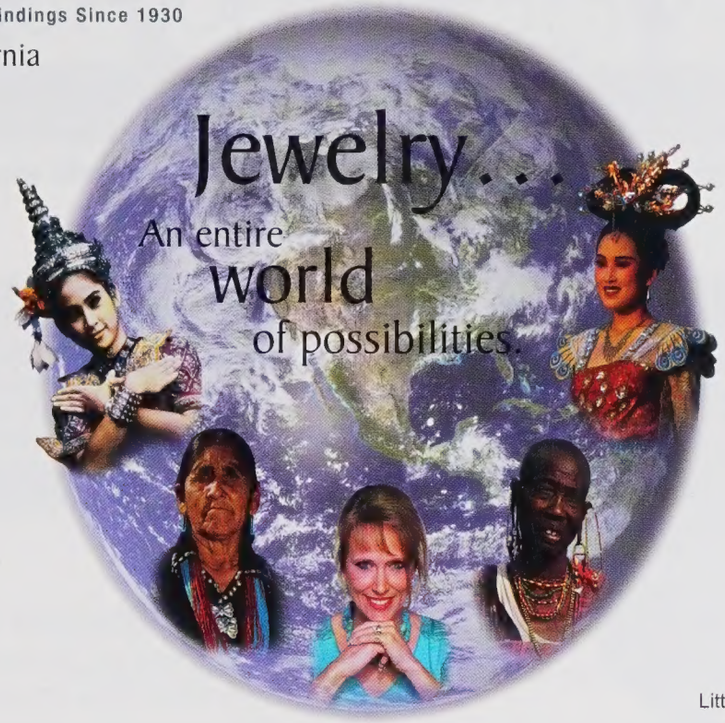

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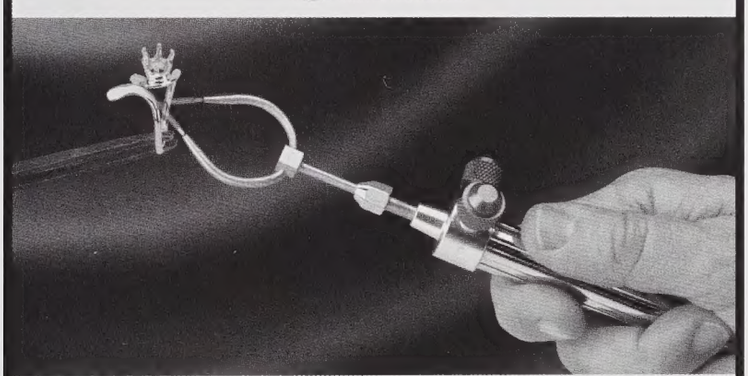

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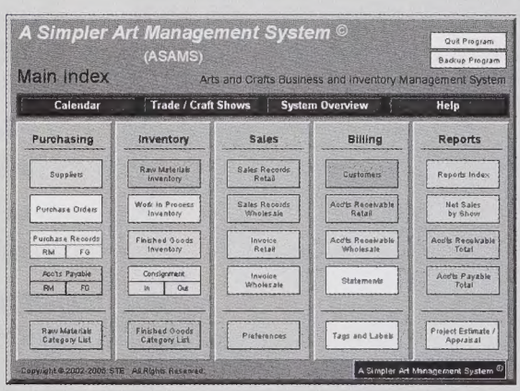

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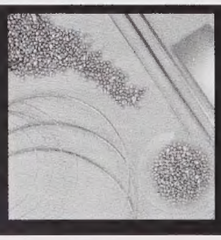

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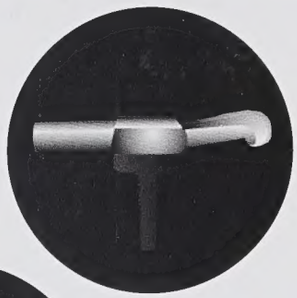

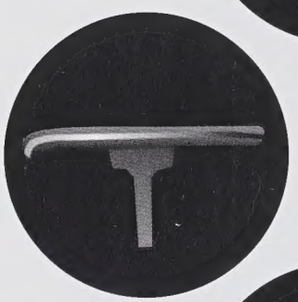

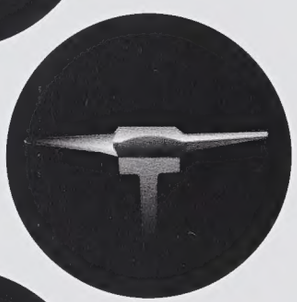

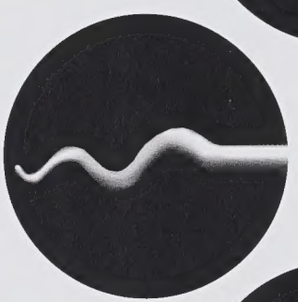

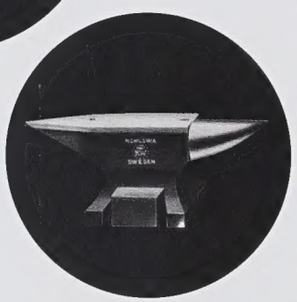

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Hanging the hammer
back on her studio wall, Marilyn watched it swing back and forth among dozens of others and smiled, knowing that she—and they—were done for the day.
She climbed the studio stairs, grabbed Jake, her 140-pound Great Dane pup, and the pair headed out the back door into the North Carolina woods. Twigs and leaves crackled under two feet and four paws. This is where she finds them—the curves, the lines, the loops—the elements she translates into art.
Eyes alert, Marilyn walked in and out of the shadows. Stopping, she pulled a young sprout from under the forest cover—five perfect leaves, two up, three down. A single pendant? Maybe string a dozen in a row? Her fingers could almost feel the curves of the gold sheet forming. She gently put the sprout into her pocket and hiked deeper into the woods.
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